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God and the State

BY

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BY MICHAEL BAKOUNINE.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE AND TRANSLATORS' PREFACE.

THIS edition of "God and the State" is reprinted from an edition published in English by the London Anarchist Groups in 1893, the same having been translated from the French and edited by Carlo Cafiero and Elisee Reclus, who have this to say of Michael Bakounine and his work:

" * * * Friends and enemies know that Bakounine was great in thought, will, persistent energy; they know also with what lofty contempt he looked down upon wealth, rank, glory, all the wretched ambitions which most human beings are base enough to entertain. A Russian gentleman, related by marriage to the highest nobility of the empire, he was one of the first to enter that intrepid society of rebels who were able to release themselves from traditions, prejudices, race and class interests, and set their own comfort at naught. With them he fought the stern battle of life, aggravated by imprisonment and exile—all the dangers and all the sorrows that men of self-sacrifice have to undergo during their tormented existence. A simple stone and a name mark the spot in the cemetery of Berne where was laid the body of Bakounine. Even that perhaps is too much to honor the memory of a worker who held vanities of that sort in such slight esteem. His friends surely will raise to him no ostentatious tombstone or statue. They know with what a huge laugh he would have received them, had they spoken to him of a commemorative structure erected to his glory—they know, too, that the true way to honor their dead is to continue their work—with the same ardor and perseverance that they themselves brought to it. In this case, indeed, a difficult task demanding all our efforts, for among the revolutionists of the present generation not one has labored more fervently in the cause of the Revolution. In Russia among the students, in Germany among the insurgents of Dresden, in Siberia among his brothers in exile, in America, in England, in France, in Switzerland, in Italy, among all earnest men, his direct influence has been considerable. The originality of his ideas, the imagery and vehemence of his eloquence, his untiring zeal in propagandism, helped, too, by the natural majesty of his person and by a powerful vitality, gave Bakounine access to all the revolutionary groups, and his efforts left deep traces everywhere, even upon those who, after having welcomed him, thrust him out because of a difference of object or method. His correspondence was most extensive; he passed entire nights in preparing long letters to his friends in the revolutionary world, and some of those letters, written to strengthen the timid, arouse the sluggish, and outline the plans of propagandism or revolt, took on the proportions of veritable volumes. These letters more than anything else explain the prodigious work of Bakounine in the revolutionary movement of the century. The pamphlets published by him, in Russian, German, French and Italian, however important they may be and however useful they may have been in spreading the new ideas, are the smallest part of Bakounine's work. The present memoir, "God and the State," is really only a fragment of a letter or report. Composed in the same manner as most of Bakounine's other writings it has the same literary fault, lack of proportion; moreover it breaks off abruptly; we have searched in vain to discover the end of the manuscript. Bakounine never had the time necessary to finish all the tasks he undertook. One work was not completed when others were already under way. "My life itself is but a fragment," he said to one who criticised his writings. Nevertheless, the readers of "God and the State" certainly will not regret that Bakounine's memoir, incomplete though it may be, has been published. Rightly addressing himself only to his honest opponents, Bakounine demonstrates to them the emptiness of their belief in that divine authority on which all temporal authorities are founded; he proves to them the purely human genesis of all governments; finally, without stopping to

discuss the bases of the state already condemned by public morality, such as physical superiority, violence, nobility, wealth, he does justice to the theory that would entrust science with the government of societies. Supposing even that it were possible to recognize, amid the conflict of ambitions and intrigues, who are the pretenders and who the real savants, and that a method of election could be found which would not fail to lodge the power in the hands of those whose knowledge is authentic, what guarantee could they offer us of the wisdom and honesty of their government? On the contrary, can we not foresee in these new masters the same follies and the same crimes found in those of former days and of the present time? In the first place, science is not; it is becoming. The learned man of today is but the know-nothing of tomorrow. Let him once imagine that he has reached the end, and for that very reason he sinks beneath even the babe just born. But could he recognize truth in its essence, he could only corrupt others by power. To establish his government he must try, like all chiefs of state, to arrest the life of the masses moving below him, keep them in ignorance in order to preserve quiet, and gradually debase them that he may rule them from a loftier throne. For the rest, since the "doctrinaires" made their appearance, the true or pretended "genius" has been trying his hand at wielding the sceptre of the world, and we know what it has cost us. We have seen them at work, all these savants; the more hardened the more they have studied; the narrower in their views the more time they have spent in examining some isolated fact in all its aspects; without any experience of life, because they have long known no other horizon than the walls of their chesse; childish in their passions and vanities, because they have been unable to participate in serious struggles and have never learned the true proportion of things. Have we not recently witnessed the foundation of a whole school of "thinkers,"—wretched courtiers, too, and people of unclean lives,—who have constructed a whole cosmogony for their sole use? According to them, worlds have been created, societies have developed, revolutions have overturned nations, empires have gone down in blood, poverty, disease and death only to raise up an elite of academicians, the full-blown flower of which all other men are but the manure. That these editors of the Temps and the Debats may have leisure to "think" nations live and die in ignorance; all other human beings are destined for death in order that these gentlemen may become immortal! But we may reassure ourselves: all these academicians will not have the audacity of Alexander in cutting with his sword the Gordian knot; they will not lift the blade of Charlemagne. Government by science is becoming as impossible as that of divine right, wealth or brute force. All powers are henceforth to be submitted to pitiless criticism. Men in whom the sentiment of equality is born suffer themselves no longer to be governed; they learn to govern themselves. In precipitating from the heights of the heavens him from whom all power is reputed to descend, societies unseat also all those who reigned in his name. Such is the revolution now in progress. States are breaking up to give place to a new order, in which, as Bakounine was fond of saying, "human justice will be substituted for divine justice." If it is allowable to cite any one name from those of the revolutionists who have taken part in this work of renovation, there is not one that may be singled out with more justice than that of Michael Bakounine.



GOD AND THE STATE.

THREE ELEMENTS or three fundamental principles constitute the essential conditions of all human development, collective and individual, in history: (1) HUMAN ANIMALITY; (2) THOUGHT; and (3) REBELLION. To the first properly corresponds SOCIAL AND PRIVATE ECONOMY; to the second, SCIENCE, and to the third, LIBERTY.

Idealists of all schools, aristocrats and bourgeois, theologians and metaphysicians, politicians and moralists, religionists, philosophers, or poets, not forgetting the general economists,—unbounded worshippers of the ideal, as we know,—are much offended when told that man, with his magnificent intelligence, his sublime ideas, and his boundless aspirations, is, like all else existing in the world, only a product of vile matter.

We may answer that the matter of which materialists speak, matter spontaneously and eternally mobile, active, productive, matter chemically determined and manifested by the properties or forces, mechanical, physical,

animal, and intelligent, which necessarily belong to it—that this matter has nothing in common with the vile matter of the idealists. The latter, a product of their false theorizing, is indeed a stupid, inanimate, immobile thing, incapable of giving birth to the smallest product, a *CAPUT MORTUUM*, an *UGLY* fancy in contrast to the *BEAUTIFUL* fancy which they call God; as the opposite of this supreme being, matter—*THEIR* matter—stripped by them of all that constitutes its real nature, necessarily represents supreme nothingness. They have taken away from matter intelligence, life, all its determining qualities, active relations or forces, motion itself, without which matter would not even have weight, leaving it nothing but impenetrability and absolute immobility in space; they have attributed all these natural forces, properties and manifestations to the imaginary Being created by their abstract fancy; then, interchanging roles, they have called this product of their imagination, this phantom, this God (who is nothing), “Supreme Being,” and, as a necessary consequence, have declared that the real Being, matter, the world, is nothing. After which they gravely tell us that this matter is incapable of producing anything, not even of setting itself in motion, and consequently must have been created by their God.

Who are right, the idealists or the materialists? The question once clearly stated, hesitation becomes impossible. Undoubtedly the idealists are wrong and the materialists right. Yes, facts are before ideals; yes, the ideal, as Proudhon said, is but a flower, whose root lies in the material conditions of existence. Yes, the whole history of humanity, intellectual and moral, political and social, is but a reflection of its economic history.

All branches of modern science, of true and disinterested science, concur in proclaiming this grand truth, fundamental and decisive: The social world, properly speaking the human world—in short, humanity—is nothing other than the supreme development, the highest manifestation of animality, at least on our planet as far as we know. But as every development necessarily implies a negation of its base or point of departure, humanity is at the same time and essentially the deliberate and gradual negation of the animal element in man; and it is precisely this negation, rational because natural, at once historical and logical, as inevitable as the development and realization of all the natural laws in the world, that constitutes and creates the ideal, the world of intellectual and moral convictions, ideas.

Yes, our first ancestors, our Adams and our Eves, were, if not gorillas, very near relatives of gorillas—omnivorous, intelligent and ferocious beasts, endowed in a higher degree than the animals of any other species with two precious faculties—*THE POWER TO THINK AND THE DESIRE TO REBEL*.

These two faculties, combining their progressive action in history, represent the negative power in the positive development of human animality, and creates consequently all that constitutes humanity in men.

The Bible, which is a very interesting and here and there very profound book when considered as one of the oldest manifestations of human wisdom and fancy, expresses this truth very naively in its myth of original sin. Jehova, who of all the good gods adored by men, was certainly the most jealous, the most vain, the most fierce, the most unjust, the most blood-thirsty, the most despotic, and the most hostile to human dignity and liberty,—Jehova had just created Adam and Eve, to satisfy we know not what caprice, perhaps that he might have some new slaves. He generously placed at their disposal the whole earth, with all its fruits and animals, and set but a single limit to this complete enjoyment. He expressly forbade them from touching the fruit of the tree of knowledge. He wished, therefore, that man, destitute of all understanding of himself, should remain an eternal beast, ever on all-fours before the “living” God, his creator and his master. But

here steps in Satan, the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him—stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge.

We know what followed. The good God, whose foresight, which is one of the divine faculties, should have warned him of what would happen, flew into a terrible and ridiculous rage; he cursed Satan, man, and the world created by himself, striking himself, so to speak, in his own creation, as children do when they get angry; and, not content with smiting our ancestors themselves, he cursed them in all the generations to come, innocent of the crime committed by their forefathers. Our Catholic and Protestant theologians look upon that as very profound and very just, precisely because it is monstrously iniquitous and absurd. Then, remembering that he was not only a God of vengeance and wrath, but also a God of love, after having tormented the existence of a few billions of poor human beings and condemned them to an eternal hell, he took pity on the rest, and, to save them and reconcile his eternal and divine love with eternal and divine anger, always greedy for victims and blood, he sent into the world as an expiatory victim, his only son, that he might be killed by men. That is called the mystery of the Redemption, the basis of all the Christian religions. Still, if the divine Savior had saved the human world! But no; in the paradise promised by Christ, as we know, such being the formal announcement, the elect will number very few. The rest, the immense majority of the generations present and to come, will burn eternally in hell. In the meantime, to console us, God, ever just, ever good, hands over the earth to the government of the Napoleon Thirds, of the William Firsts, of the Ferdinands of Austria, and of the Alexanders of all the Russias.

Such are the absurd tales that are told and the monstrous doctrines that are taught, in the full light of the nineteenth century, in all the popular schools of Europe, at the express commands of the governments. They call this civilizing the people! Is it not plain that all governments are systematic poisoners, interested stupefiers of the popular masses?

These are the base and criminal means which they employ to keep the nations in perpetual slavery, undoubtedly that they may be the better able to fleece them. Of what consequence are the crimes of all the Tropmanns in the world compared with this crime of treason against humanity committed daily, in broad day, over the whole surface of the civilized world, by those who dare to call themselves the guardians and the fathers of the people?

And yet, in the myth of original sin, God admitted that Satan was right; he recognized that the devil did not deceive Adam and Eve in promising them knowledge and liberty as a reward for the act of disobedience which he had induced them to commit; for, immediately they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, God himself said (see Bible): "Behold, the man is become as one of the Gods, to know good and evil; prevent him, therefore, from eating of the fruit of eternal life, lest he become immortal like Ourselves."

Let us disregard now the fabulous portion of this myth and consider its true meaning, which, by the way, is very clear. Man has emancipated himself; he has separated himself from animality and constituted himself a man: he has begun his distinctively human history and development by an act of disobedience and science—that is, by rebellion and thought.

The system of the idealists is quite the contrary to this. It is the reversal of all these human experiences and of that universal and common good sense which is the essential condition of all human understanding, and which, in rising from the simple and long-recognized truth that twice two are four to the sublimest and most complex scientific considerations—admit-

ting, moreover, nothing that has not stood the severest tests of experience and observation of things and facts;—becomes the only serious basis of human knowledge.

The gradual development of the material world, as well as of organic and animal life and of the historically progressive intelligence in man, individually or socially, is perfectly conceivable. It is a wholly natural movement from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, from the inferior to the superior; a movement in conformity with all our daily experiences, and consequently in conformity also with our natural logic with the distinctive laws of our mind, which, being formed and developed only by the aid of these same experiences, is, so to speak, but the mental, cerebral production or reflected summary thereof.

Very far from pursuing the natural order from the lower to the higher, from the inferior to the superior, and from the relatively simple to the most complex: instead of wisely and rationally accompanying the progressive and real movement from the world called inorganic to the world organic, vegetable, animal and then distinctively human—from matter or chemical being to matter or living being, and from living being to thinking being,—the idealists, obsessed, blinded, and pushed on by the divine phantom which they have inherited from theology, take precisely the opposite course. They go from the higher to the lower, from the superior to the inferior, from the complex to the simple. They begin with God, either as a person or divine substance or idea, and the first step that they take is a terrible fall from the sublime heights of the eternal idea into the mire of the material world; from absolute perfection to absolute imperfection; from thought to being, or rather, from supreme being to nothing. When, how and why the divine Being, eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect, probably weary of himself, decided upon this desperate *SALTO MORTALE* is something which no idealist, no theologian, no metaphysician, no poet, has ever been able to understand himself or explain to the profane. All religions, past and present, and all the systems of transcendental philosophy hinge on this unique and iniquitous* mystery. Holy men, inspired lawgivers, prophets, messiahs, have searched it for life, and found only torment and death. Like the ancient sphinx, it has devoured them, because they could not explain it. Great philosophers, from Heraclides and Plato down to Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, not to mention the Hindoo philosophers, have written heaps of volumes and built systems as ingenious as sublime, in which they have said by the way many beautiful and grand things and discovered immortal truths, but they have left this mystery, the principal object of their transcendental investigations, as unfathomable as before. The gigantic efforts of the most wonderful geniuses that the world has known, and who, one after another, for at least thirty centuries, have undertaken anew this labor of Sisyphus, have resulted only in rendering this mystery still more incomprehensible. Is it to be hoped that it will be unveiled to us by the routine speculations of some pedantic disciple of an artificially warmed-over metaphysics at a time when all living and serious spirits have abandoned that ambiguous science born of a compromise between the unreason of faith and sound scientific reason?

It is evident that this terrible mystery is inexplicable—that is, absurd; because only the absurd admits of no explanation. It is evident that whoever finds it essential to his happiness and life must renounce his reason, and

*I call it iniquitous because this mystery has been and still continues to be the consecration of all the horrors which have been and are still being committed in the world; I call it iniquitous because all the other theological and metaphysical absurdities which debase the human mind are but its necessary consequences.

return, if he can, to naive, blind, stupid faith, to repeat with Tertullianus and all since believers these words, which sum up the very quintessence of theology: "CREDO QUIA ABSURDUM."

Then all discussion ceases, and nothing remains but the triumphant stupidity of faith. But immediately there arises another question:

How comes an intelligent and well-informed man ever to feel the need of believing in this mystery.

Nothing is more natural than that the belief in God, the creator, regulator, judge, master, curser, savior and benefactor of the world, should still prevail among the people, especially in the rural districts, where it is even more wide-spread than among the proletariat of the cities. The people are unfortunately still very ignorant, and are kept in ignorance by the systematic efforts of all the governments, who consider ignorance, not without good reason, as one of the essential conditions of their own power. Weighted down by their daily labor, deprived of leisure, of intellectual intercourse, of reading, in short of all the means and a good portion of the stimulants that develop thought in men, the people generally accept religious traditions without criticism and in a lump. These traditions surround them from infancy in all the situations of life, and artificially sustained in their minds by a multitude of official poisoners of all sorts, priests and laymen, are transformed therein into a sort of mental habit, too often more powerful than even their good sense.

There is another reason which explains and in some sort justifies the absurd beliefs of the people—namely, the wretched situation to which they find themselves condemned by the economic organization of society in the most civilized countries of Europe. Reduced, intellectually and morally as well as materially, to the minimum of human existence, confined in their life like a prisoner in his prison, without horizon, without outlet, without even a future if we believe the economists, the people would have the singularly narrow souls and blunted instincts of the bourgeois if they did not feel a desire to escape: but of escape there are but three methods—two chimerical and a third real. The first two are the dram shop and the church, debauchery of the body or debauchery of the mind; the third is social revolution. This last will be much more potent than all the theological propaganda of the freethinkers to destroy the religious beliefs and dissolute habits of the people—beliefs and habits much more intimately connected than is generally supposed. In substituting for the at once illusory and brutal enjoyments of bodily and spiritual licentiousness those enjoyments, as refined as they are abundant, of humanity developed in each and all, the social revolution alone will have the power to close at the same time all the dram-shops and all the churches.

Till then, the people taken as a whole, will believe; and if they have no reason to believe they will have at least a right.

There is a class of people who, if they do not believe, must at least make a semblance of believing. This class, comprising all the tormentors, all the oppressors, and all the exploiters of humanity; priests, monarchs, statesmen, soldiers, public and private financiers, officials of all sorts, policemen, gendarmes, jailers and executioners, monopolists, capitalists, tax-leeches, contractors and proprietors, lawyers, economists, politicians of all shades, down to the smallest vendor of sweetmeats—all will repeat in unison these words of Voltaire:

"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

For, you understand, "the people must have a religion." That is the safety-valve.

There exists, finally, a somewhat numerous class of honest but timid

souls who, too intelligent to take the Christian dogmas seriously, reject them in detail, but have neither the courage nor the strength nor the necessary resolution to summarily renounce them altogether. They abandon to your criticism all the special absurdities of religion, they turn up their noses at all the miracles, but they cling desperately to the principal absurdity—the source of all others—to the miracle that explains and justifies all the other miracles, the existence of God. Their God is not the vigorous and powerful being, the wholly positive God of theology. It is a nebulous, diaphanous, illusory being that vanishes into nothing at the first attempt to grasp it; it is a mirage, an *IGNIS FATUUS* that neither warms nor illuminates. And yet they hold fast to it and believe that, were it to disappear, all would disappear with it. They are uncertain, sickly souls, who have lost their reckoning in the present civilization, belonging neither to the present nor the future; pale phantoms, eternally suspended between heaven and earth, and occupying exactly the same position between the politics of the bourgeoisie and the socialism of the proletariat. They have neither the power nor the wish nor the determination to follow out their thought, and they waste their time and pains in constantly endeavoring to reconcile the irreconcilable. In public life these are known as the bourgeois socialists. With them discussion is out of the question. They are too puny.

But there are a few illustrious men of whom no one will dare to speak without respect, and whose vigorous health, strength of mind, and good intention no one will dream of calling in question. I need only cite the names of Mazzini, Michelet, Quinet, John Stewart Mill.* Generous and strong souls, great hearts, great minds, great writers, and the first named the heroic and revolutionary regenerator of a great nation, they are all apostles of idealism and bitter despisers and adversaries of materialism, and consequently of socialism also, in philosophy as well as in politics. Against them, then, we must discuss this question.

First let it be understood that not one of the illustrious men I have just named nor any other idealistic thinker of any consequence in our day has given any attention to the logical side of this question properly speaking. No one has tried to settle philosophically the possibility of the divine *SALTO MORTALE* from the pure and eternal regions of spirit into the mire of the material world. Have they feared to approach this irreconcilable contradiction and despaired of solving it after the failures of the great geniuses of history, or have they looked upon it as already sufficiently well settled? That is their secret. The fact is that they have neglected the theoretical demonstration of the existence of a God, and have developed only its practical motives and consequences. They have treated it as a fact universally accepted, and, as such, no longer susceptible of any doubt whatever, for sole proof thereof limiting themselves to the establishment of the antiquity and this very universality of the belief in God.

This imposing unanimity, in the eyes of many illustrious men and writers,—to quote only the most famous of them, Joseph de Maistre and the great Italian patriot, Guiseppe Mazzini,—is of more value than all the demonstrations of science; and, if the reasoning of a small number of logical and even very powerful, but isolated, thinkers is against it, so much the worse, they say, for these thinkers and their logic, for universal consent, the general and primitive adoption of an idea, have always been considered the

*Stuart Mill is perhaps the only one whose serious idealism may be fairly doubted, and that for two reasons: first, that, if not absolutely the disciple, he is a passionate admirer, an adherent of the positive philosophy of Auguste Comte, a philosophy which, in spite of its numerous reservations, is really atheistic; second, that Stuart Mill was English, and in England to proclaim one's self an atheist is to ostracize one's self, even at this late day.

most triumphant testimony to its truth. The sentiment of the whole world, a conviction that is found and maintained always and everywhere, cannot be mistaken; it must have its root in a necessity absolutely inherent in the very nature of man. And since it has been established that all peoples, past and present, have believed and still believe in the existence of God, it is clear that those who have the misfortune to doubt it, whatever the logic that led them to this doubt, are exceptions, anomalies, monsters. Thus, then, the antiquity and universality of a belief, though contrary to all science and all logic, should be regarded as sufficient and unimpeachable proof of its truth.

Why? Until the days of Copernicus and Galileo everybody believed that the sun revolved about the earth. Was not everybody mistaken? What is more ancient and more universal than slavery? Cannibalism perhaps. From the origin of historic society down to the present day there has been always and everywhere exploitation of the compulsory labor of the masses—slaves, serfs, employes—by some dominant minority—oppression of the people by the Church and by the State. Must it be concluded that this exploitation and oppression are necessities absolutely inherent in the very existence of human society? These are examples which show that the argument of the champions of the good God prove nothing. Nothing, in fact, is as universal or as ancient as the iniquitous and the absurd; truth and justice, on the contrary, are the least universal, the youngest features of the development of human society. In this fact, too, lies the explanation of the constant historical phenomenon,—namely: the persecution of which those who first proclaim the truth have been and continue to be the objects at the hands of the official, privileged and interested representatives of "universal" and "ancient" beliefs, and also at the hands of the same popular masses who, after having tortured them, always end by adopting their ideas and rendering them victorious.

To us materialists and revolutionary socialists, there is nothing astounding or terrifying in this historical phenomenon. Strong in our conscience, in our love of truth at all hazards, in that passion for logic which of itself alone constitutes a great power and outside of which there is no thought; strong in our passion for justice and in our unshakable faith in the triumph of humanity over all theoretical and practical bestialities; strong, finally, in the mutual confidence and support given each other by the few who share our convictions,—we resign ourselves to all the consequences of this historical phenomenon, in which we see the manifestation of a social law as natural, as necessary, and as invariable as all the other laws which govern the universe. This law is a logical, inevitable consequence of the animal origin of human society; and in face of all the scientific, physiological, psychological and historical proof accumulated at the present day, as well as in face of the exploits actually occurring, it is no longer possible to really doubt it. But from the moment that this animal origin of man is accepted, all is explained. History then appears to us as the revolutionary negation, now slow, apathetic, sluggish, now passionate and powerful, of the past. It consists precisely in the progressive negation of the primitive animality of man by the development of his humanity. Man, a wild beast, cousin of the gorilla, has emerged from the profound darkness of animal instinct into the light of the mind, which explains in a wholly natural way all his past mistakes and partially consoles us for his present errors. He has gone out from animal slavery, and, passing through divine slavery, a temporary condition between his animality and his humanity, he is now marching on to the conquest and realization of human liberty. Whence it results that the antiquity of a belief, of an idea, far from proving anything in its favor, ought, on the contrary, to lead us to suspect it. For behind us is our

animality and before us our humanity; human light, the only thing that can warm and enlighten us, the only thing that can emancipate us, give us dignity, freedom and happiness, and realize fraternity among us, is never at the beginning, but relatively to the epoch in which we live, always at the end of history. Let us, then, never look back, let us look ever forward; for forward is our sunlight, forward our salvation; if it is justifiable, and even useful and necessary, to turn back to study our past, it is only in order to establish what we must no longer be, what we have believed and thought and what we must no longer believe or think, what we have done and what we must do nevermore.

So much for antiquity. As for the universality of an error, it proves but one thing—the similarity, if not the perfect identity, of human nature in all ages and under all skies. And, since it is established that all peoples, at all periods of their life, have believed and still believe in God, we must simply conclude that the divine idea, an outcome of ourselves, is an error historically necessary in the development of humanity, and ask why and how it was produced in history and why an immense majority of the human race still accept it as a truth.

Until we shall account to ourselves for the manner in which the idea of a supernatural or divine world was developed and had to be developed in the historical evolution of the human conscience, all scientific demonstration of its absurdity will be in vain; until then we shall never succeed in destroying it in the opinion of the majority, because we shall never attack it in the very depths of the human being where it had its birth. Condemned to a fruitless struggle, without issue and without end, we must ever content ourselves with fighting it solely on the surface, in its innumerable manifestations, whose absurdity will scarcely be beaten down by the blows of common sense before it will appear in a new form no less nonsensical. Until the root of all the absurdities that torment the world shall be destroyed, belief in God will remain intact and never fail to bring forth new offspring. Thus, at the present time, in certain sections of the highest society, Spiritism tends to establish itself upon the ruins of Christianity.

It is not only in the interest of the masses, it is in that of the health of our own minds, that we should strive to understand the historic genesis, the succession of causes which developed and produced the idea of God in the consciousness of men. In vain shall we call and believe ourselves atheists, until we comprehend these causes, for, until then, we shall always suffer ourselves to be more or less governed by the clamors of this universal conscience whose secret we have not discovered: and, considering the natural weakness of even the strongest individual against the all-powerful influence of the social surroundings that trammel him, we are always in danger of relapsing sooner or later, in one way or another, into the abyss of religious absurdity. Examples of these conversions are frequent in society today.

I have stated the chief practical reason of the power still exercised today over the masses by religious beliefs. These mystical tendencies do not signify in man so much an aberration of mind as a deep discontent at heart. They are the instinctive and passionate protest of the human being against the narrowness, the platitudes, the sorrows, and the shames of a wretched existence. For this malady, I have already said, there is but one remedy—a social revolution.

In other writings I have endeavored to show the causes responsible for the birth and historical development of religious hallucinations in the human conscience. Here it is my purpose to treat this question of the existence of a God, or of the divine origin of the world or of man, solely from the standpoint of its moral and social utility, and I shall say only a few

words, to better explain my thought, regarding the theoretical grounds of this belief.

All religions, with their gods, their demigods, and their prophets, their messiahs and their saints, were created by the credulous fancy of men who had not attained the full development and full possession of their faculties. Consequently the religious heaven is nothing but a mirage in which man, exalted by ignorance and faith, discovers his own image, but enlarged and reversed—that is, divinized. The history of religions, of the birth, grandeur and decline of the gods who have succeeded one another in human belief, is nothing, therefore, but the development of the collective intelligence and conscience of mankind. As fast as they discovered, in the course of their historically progressive advance, either in themselves or in external nature, a power, a quality, or even any great defect whatever, they attributed them to their gods, after having exaggerated and enlarged them beyond measure, after the manner of children, by an act of their religious fancy. Thanks to this modesty and pious generosity of believing and credulous men, heaven has grown rich with the spoils of the earth, and, by a necessary consequence, the richer heaven became, the more wretched became humanity and the earth. God once installed, he was naturally proclaimed the cause, reason, arbiter, and absolute disposer of all things: the world thenceforth was nothing, God was all; and man, his real creator, after having extracted him from the void, bowed down before him, worshipped him, and avowed himself his creature and his slave.

Christianity is precisely the religion par excellence, because it exhibits and manifests, to the fullest extent, the very nature and essence of every religious system, which is the impoverishment, enslavement and annihilation of humanity for the benefit of divinity.

God being everything, the real world and man are nothing. God being truth, justice, goodness, beauty, power and life; man is falsehood, iniquity, evil, ugliness, impotence and death. God being master, man is the slave. Incapable of finding justice, truth and eternal life by his own effort, he can attain them only through a divine revelation. But whoever says revelation says revealers, messiahs, prophets, priests, and legislators inspired by God himself; and these, once recognized by divinity on earth, as the holy instructors of humanity, chosen by God himself to direct it in the path of salvation, necessarily exercise absolute power. All men owe them passive and unlimited obedience; for against the divine reason there is no human reason, and against the justice of God no terrestrial justice holds. Slaves of God, men must also be slaves of Church and State, in so far as the State is consecrated by the Church. This truth Christianity, better than all other religions that exist or have existed, understood, not excepting even the old Oriental religions, which included only distinct and privileged nations, while Christianity aspires to embrace entire humanity; and this truth Roman Catholicism, alone among all the Christian sects, has proclaimed and realized with rigorous logic. This is why Christianity is the absolute religion, the final religion; and why the Apostolic and Roman Church is the only consistent, legitimate and divine church.

With all due respect, then, to the metaphysicians and religious idealists, philosophers, politicians, or poets: The idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and practice.

Unless, then, we desire the enslavement and degradation of mankind, as the Jesuits desire it, as the memoirs, pietists or Protestant Methodists

desire it, we may not, must not make the slightest concession either to the God of theology or the God of metaphysics. He who, in this mystical alphabet, begins with God will inevitably end with God; he who desires to worship God must harbor no childish illusions about the matter, but bravely renounce his liberty and humanity. If God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free; then, God does not exist. I defy anyone whomsoever to avoid this circle; now, therefore, let all choose.

Is it necessary to point out to what extent and in what manner religions debase and corrupt the people? They destroy their reason, the principle instrument of human emancipation, and reduce them to imbecility, the essential condition of slavery. They dishonor human labor, and make it a sign and source of servitude. They kill the idea and sentiment of human justice, ever tipping the balance to the side of triumphant knaves, privileged objects of divine indulgence. They kill human pride and dignity, protecting only the cringing and humble. They stifle in the heart of nations every feeling of human fraternity, filling it with cruelty instead.

All religions are cruel, all founded on blood; for all rest principally on the idea of sacrifice—that is, on the perpetual immolation of humanity to the insatiable vengeance of divinity. In this bloody mystery man is always the victim, and the priest—a man also, but a man privileged by grace—is the executioner. That explains why the priests of all religions, the best, the most humane, the gentlest, almost always have at the bottom of their hearts—and, if not in their hearts, in their imaginations, in their minds—something cruel and sanguinary.

None know all this better than our illustrious contemporary idealists. They are learned men, who know history by heart; and, as they are at the same time living men, great souls penetrated with a sincere and profound love for the welfare of humanity they have cursed and branded all these misdeeds, all these crimes of religion with an eloquence unparalled. They reject with indignation all solidarity with the God of positive religions and with his representatives, past, present and on earth.

The God whom they adore, or whom they think they adore, is distinguished from the real gods of history precisely in this—that he is not at all a positive god, defined in any way whatever, theologically or even metaphysically. He is neither the Supreme Being of Robespierre and J. J. Rousseau, nor the pantheistic god of Spinoza, nor even the at once innocent, transcendental, and very equivocal god of Hegel. They take good care not to give him any positive definition whatever, feeling very strongly that any definition would subject him to the dissolving power of criticism. They will not say whether he is a personal or an impersonal god, whether he created or did not create the world; they will not even speak of his divine providence. All that might compromise. They content themselves with saying “god” and nothing more. But then what is their god? Not even an idea; it is an aspiration.

It is the generic name of all that seems grand, good, beautiful noble, and human. Why then, do they not say man? Ah! because King William of Prussia and Napoleon III and all their compeers are likewise men—which bothers them very much. Real humanity presents a mixture of all that is most sublime and beautiful with all that is vilest and most monstrous in the world. How do they get over this? Why, they call one divine and the other bestial, representing divinity and animality as two poles, between which they place humanity. They either will not or cannot understand that these three terms are really but one, and that to separate them is to destroy them.

They are not strong on logic, and one might say that they despise it.

That is what distinguishes them from the pantheistical and deistical metaphysicians, and gives their ideals the character of a practical idealism, drawing its inspiration much less from the severe development of a thought than from the experiences, I might almost say the emotions, historical and collective as well as individual, of life. This gives their propaganda an appearance of wealth and vital power, but an appearance only; for life itself becomes sterile when paralyzed by a logical contradiction.

This contradiction lies here: They wish God, and they wish humanity. They persist in connecting two terms which, once separated, can come together only to destroy each other. They say in a single breath: God is the liberty of man, God is the dignity, justice, equality, fraternity, prosperity of men—regardless of the fatal logic by virtue of which, if God exists, all these things are condemned to non-existence. For, if God is, he is necessarily the eternal, supreme, absolute master, and, if such a master exists, man is a slave; now, if he is a slave, neither justice, nor equality, nor fraternity, nor prosperity are possible. In vain, flying in the face of good sense and all the teachings of history, do they represent their god as animated by the tenderest love of human liberty; a master, whoever he may be and however liberal he may desire to show himself, remains none the less always a master. His existence necessarily implies the slavery of all that is beneath him. Therefore, if God existed, only in one way could he serve human liberty—that is, by ceasing to exist.

A jealous lover of human liberty, and deeming it the absolute condition of all that we admire and respect humanity, I reverse the phrase of Voltaire and say that, if God existed, it would be necessary to abolish him.

The severe logic that dictates these words is far too evident to require a development of this argument. And it seems to me impossible that these illustrious men, whose names so celebrated and so justly respected I have sighted, should not have struck it by themselves, and should not have perceived the contradiction in which they involve themselves in speaking of God and human liberty at once. To have disregarded it, they must have considered this inconsistency or logical license PRACTICALLY necessary to humanity's well-being.

Perhaps, too, while speaking of liberty as something very respectable and very dear in their eyes, they give the term a meaning quite different from the conception entertained by us, materialists and revolutionary socialists. Indeed, they never speak of it without immediately adding another word—authority. A word and thing which we detest with all our hearts.

What is authority? Is it the inevitable power of natural laws which manifest themselves in the necessary concatenation and succession of phenomena in the physical and social worlds? Indeed, against these laws revolt is not only forbidden—it is even impossible. We may misunderstand them or not know them at all, but we cannot disobey them; because they constitute the fundamental conditions of our existence; they envelop us, penetrate us, regulate all our movements, thoughts and acts; even when we try to disobey them, we only show their omnipotence. Yes; we are absolutely the slaves of these laws. But in such slavery there is no humiliation. For slavery supposes an external master, a legislator outside of him who he commands, while these laws are not outside of us; they are inherent in us; they constitute our being, our whole being, physically, intellectually and morally: we live, we breathe, we act, we think, we wish only through these laws. Without them we are nothing, **WE ARE NOT**. Whence, then, could we derive the power and the wish to rebel against them?

In his relation to natural laws, but one liberty is possible to man—that of recognizing and applying them on an ever-extending scale in conformity

with the object of collective or individual emancipation or humanization which he pursues. These laws, once recognized, exercise an authority which is never disputed by the mass of men. One must, for instance, be at the bottom either a theologian or at least a metaphysician, jurist, or bourgeois economist to rebel against the law by which twice two make four. One must have faith to imagine that fire will not burn nor water drown, except, indeed, recourse be had to some subterfuge founded in its turn upon some other natural law. But these revolts, or, rather, these attempts at or foolish fancies of an impossible revolt, are decidedly the exception; for, in general, it may be said that the mass of men, in their daily lives, acknowledge the government of common sense—that is, of the sum of the natural laws generally recognized—in an almost absolute fashion.

The great misfortune is that a large number of natural laws, already established as such by science, remain unknown to the popular masses, thanks to the watchfulness of these tutelary governments that exist, as we know, for the good of the people.

There is another grave difficulty—namely, that the major portion of the natural laws connected with the development of human society, which are quite as necessary and invariable as the laws that govern the physical world, have not been duly established and recognized by science itself.* Once they shall have been recognized by science, and then from science, by means of an extensive system of popular education and instruction, shall have passed into the consciousness of all, the question of liberty will be entirely solved. The stubbornest authorities must admit that then there will be no need of political organization or direction or legislation, three things which, whether they emanate from the will of the sovereign or from the vote of a parliament elected by universal suffrage, and even should they conform to the system of natural laws—which has never been the case and never will be the case—are always equally fatal and hostile to the liberty of the masses from the very fact that they impose upon them a system of external and therefore despotic laws.

The liberty of man consists solely in this: That he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognized them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatever, divine or human, collective or individual.

Suppose a learned academy, composed of the most illustrious representatives of science; suppose this academy be charged with legislation for and the organization of society, and that, inspired only by the purest love of truth, it frames none but laws in absolute harmony with the latest discoveries of science. Well, I maintain, for my part, that such legislation and such organization would be a monstrosity, and that for two reasons: First, that human science is always and necessarily imperfect, and that, comparing what it has discovered with what remains to be discovered, we may say that it is always in its cradle. So that were we to try to force the practical life of men, collective as well as individual, into strict and exclusive conformity with the latest data of science, we should condemn society as well as individuals to suffer martyrdom on the bed of Procrustes, which would soon end by dislocating and stifling them, life ever remaining an infinitely greater thing than science.

The second reason is this: A society which should obey legislation emanating from scientific academy, not because it understood itself the rational character of this legislation (in which case the existence or the academy would become useless), but because this legislation, emanating

*Bakounine undoubtedly refers here to "economic laws" and "social science," which, in fact, is still only in its infancy.—Editors' Note.

from the academy, was imposed in the name of a science which it venerated without comprehending—such a society would be a society, not of men, but of brutes. It would be a second edition of those missions in Paraguay which submitted so long to the government of the Jesuits. It would surely and rapidly descend to the lowest stage of idiocy.

But there is still a third reason which would render such a government impossible—namely, that a scientific academy invested with a sovereignty, so to speak, absolute, even if it were composed of the most illustrious men, would infallibly and soon end in its own moral and intellectual corruption. Even today, with the few privileges allowed them, such is the history of all academies. The greatest scientific genius, from the moment he becomes an academician, an officially licensed savant, inevitably lapses into sluggishness. He loses his spontaneity, his revolutionary hardihood, and that troublesome and savage energy characteristic of the grandest geniuses, ever called to destroy old worlds and lay the foundations of new. He undoubtedly gains in politeness, in utilitarian and practical wisdom, what he loses in power of thought. In a word, he becomes corrupted.

It is the characteristic of privilege and of every privileged position to kill the mind and heart of men. The privileged man, whether politically or economically, is a man depraved in mind and heart. That is a social law which admits of no exception, and is as applicable to entire nations as to classes, corporations and individuals. It is the law of equality, the supreme condition of liberty and humanity. The principal object of this treatise is precisely to demonstrate this truth in all the manifestations of human life.

A scientific body to which had been confided the government of society would soon end by devoting itself no longer to science at all, but to quite another affair; and that affair, as in the case of all established powers, would be its own eternal perpetuation by rendering the society confided to its care ever more stupid and consequently more in need of its government and direction.

But that which is true of scientific academies is also true of all constituent and legislative assemblies, even those chosen by universal suffrage. In the latter case they may renew their composition, it is true, but this does not prevent the formation in a few years of time of a body of politicians, privileged in fact, though not in law, who, devoting themselves exclusively to the direction of the public affairs of a country, finally form a sort of political aristocracy or oligarchy. Witness the United States of America and Switzerland.

Consequently, no external legislation and no authority—one, for that matter, being inseparable from the other, and both tending to the servitude of society and the degradation of the legislators themselves.

Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots I refer to the authority of the bootmakers; concerning houses, canals or railroads I consult that of the architect or engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the savant to impose his authority upon me. I accept them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestible right of criticism and censure. I do not content myself with consulting a single authority in any special branch; I consult several; I compare their opinions, and choose that which seems to me the soundest. But I recognize no infallible authority, even in special questions; consequently, whatever respect I may have for humanity and for the sincerity of such and such an individual, I have no absolute faith in any person. Such a faith would be fatal to my reason, to my liberty, and even to the success of

my undertakings; it would immediately transform me into a stupid slave, an instrument of the will and interests of another.

If I bow before the authority of the specialists and avow my readiness to follow, to a certain extent and as long as may seem to me necessary, their indications and even their directions, it is because their authority is imposed upon me by no one, neither by men nor by God. Otherwise I would repel them with horror, and bid the devil take their counsels, their directions, and their services, certain that they would make me pay, by the loss of my liberty and self-respect, for such scraps of truth, wrapped in a multitude of lies, as they might give me.

I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed upon me by my own reason. I am conscious of my inability to grasp, in all its details and positive developments, any very large portion of human knowledge. The greatest intelligence would not be equal to a comprehension of the whole. Thence results, for science as well as industry, the necessity of the division and association of labor. I receive and I give—such is human life. Each directs and is directed in his turn. Therefore there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary and above all, voluntary authority and subordination.

This same reason forbids me, then, to recognize a fixed, constant and universal authority, because there is no universal man; no man capable of grasping in that wealth of detail, without which the application of science to life is impossible, all the sciences, all the branches of social life. And if such universality could ever be realized in a single man, and if he wished to take advantage thereof to impose his authority upon us, it would be necessary to drive this man out of society, because his authority would inevitably reduce all the others to slavery and imbecility. I do not think society ought to maltreat men of genius as it has done hitherto; but neither do I think it should indulge them too far, still less accord them any privilege or exclusive rights whatsoever; and that for three reasons: First, because it would always mistake a charlatan for a man of genius; second, because through such a system of privileges, it might transform into a charlatan a real man of genius, demoralize him, and degrade him; and, finally, because it would establish a master over itself.

To sum up. We recognize, then, the absolute authority of science, because the sole object of science is the mental reproduction, as well-considered and systematic as possible, of the natural laws inherent in the material, intellectual, and moral life of both the physical and the social worlds, these two worlds constituting, in fact, but one and the same natural world. Outside of this solely legitimate authority, legitimate because rational and in harmony with human liberty, we declare all other authorities false, arbitrary and fatal.

We recognize the absolute authority of science, but we reject the infallibility and universality of the savant. In our church—if I may be permitted to use for a moment an expression which I so detest: Church and State are my two betes noires—in our church, as in the Protestant church, we have a chief, an invisible Christ, Science; and like the Protestants, more logical even than the Protestants, we will suffer neither pope, nor council, nor conclaves of infallible cardinals, nor bishops nor even priests. Our Christ differs from the Protestant and Christian Christ in this—that the latter is a personal being, ours impersonal; the Christian Christ, already completed in an eternal past, presents himself as an perfect being, while the completion and perfection of our Christ, Science, are ever in the future—which is equivalent to saying that they will never be realized. Therefore, in recognizing absolute science as the only authority, we in no way compromise our liberty.

I mean by this phrase absolute science, the truly universal science which would reproduce ideally, to its fullest extent and all its infinite detail, the universe, the system or coördination of all the natural laws manifested by the incessant development of the world. It is evident that such a science, the sublime object of all the efforts of the human mind, will never be fully and absolutely realized. Our Christ, then, will remain eternally unfinished, which must considerably take down the pride of his licensed representatives among us. Against that "God the Son" in whose name they assume to impose upon us their insolent and pedantic authority, we appeal to "God the Father," who is the real world, real life, or only too imperfect expression thereof, we being the immediate representatives, we, real beings, living, working, struggling, loving, aspiring, enjoying and suffering.

But, while rejecting the absolute, universal and infallible authority of men of science, we willingly bow before the respectable, although relative, temporary and restricted authority of the representatives of special sciences, asking nothing better than to consult them by turns, and very grateful for such precious information as they may extend to us, on condition of their willingness to receive from us on occasions when and concerning matters about which we are more learned than they. In general we ask nothing better than to see men endowed with great knowledge, great experience, great minds, and, above all, great hearts, exercise over us a natural and legitimate influence, freely accepted, and never imposed in the name of any authority whatsoever, celestial or terrestrial. We accept all natural authorities and all influences of fact, but none of right; for every influence of right, officially imposed as such, becoming directly an oppression and a falsehood, would inevitably impose upon us, as I believe I have sufficiently shown, slavery and absurdity.

In a word, we reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, official and legal influence, even though arising from universal suffrage, convinced that it can only turn out to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interest of the immense majority in subjection to them.

The modern idealists understand authority in quite a different way. Although free from the traditional superstitions of all the existing positive religions, they nevertheless attach to this idea of authority a divine, an absolute meaning. This authority is not that of a truth miraculously revealed, nor that of a truth rigorously and scientifically demonstrated. They base it to a slight extent upon quasi-philosophical reasoning, and to a large extent on vaguely religious faith, to a large extent also on sentiment and poetic abstraction. Their religion is, as it were, at least an attempt to divinize all that constitutes humanity in men.

This is just the opposite of the work that we are doing. In behalf of human liberty, dignity and prosperity we believe it our duty to recover from heaven the goods which it has stolen and return them to earth. They, on the contrary, endeavoring to commit a final religious heroic larceny, would restore to heaven, that divine robber, the grandest, finest and noblest of humanity's possessions. It is now the freethinkers' turn to pillage heaven by the audacious impiety of their scientific analysis.

The idealists undoubtedly believe that human ideas and deeds, in order to exercise greater authority among men, must be invested with a divine sanction. How is this sanction manifested? Not by a miracle, as in the positive religions, but by the very grandeur and sanctity of the ideas and deeds: whatever is grand, whatever is beautiful, whatever is noble, whatever is just, is divine. In this new religious cult every man inspired by these ideas, by these deeds becomes a priest, directly consecrated by God himself.

And the proof? He needs none beyond the very grandeur of the ideas which he expresses and the deeds which he performs. These are so lofty that they can have been inspired only by God.

Such, in few words, is their whole philosophy: a philosophy of sentiments, not of real thoughts, a sort of a metaphysical pietism. This seems harmless but it is not so at all, and the very precise, very narrow and very barren doctrine hidden under the intangible vagueness of these poetic forms leads to the disastrous results that all the positive religions lead to—namely, the most complete negation of human liberty and dignity.

To proclaim as divine all that is grand, just, real and beautiful in humanity is to tacitly admit that humanity of itself would have been unable to produce it—that is, that, abandoned to itself, its own nature is miserable, iniquitous, base and ugly. Thus we come back to the essence of all religion; in other words, to the disparagement of humanity for the benefit of divinity. And from the moment that the natural inferiority of man and his fundamental incapacity to rise by his own effort, unaided by any divine inspiration, to the comprehension of just and true ideas are admitted it becomes necessary to admit also the theological, political and social consequences of the positive religions. From the moment that God, the perfect and supreme Being, is posited face to face with humanity, divine mediators, the elect, the inspired of God, spring from the earth to enlighten, direct and govern in his name the human race.

May we not suppose that all men are equally inspired by God? Then, surely, there is no further use for mediators. But this supposition is impossible, because it is too clearly contradicted by the facts. It would compel us to attribute to divine inspiration all the absurdities and errors which appear, and all the follies, horrors, base deeds, and cowardly actions which are committed, in the world. But perhaps, then, only a few men are divinely inspired, the great men of history, the virtuous geniuses, as the illustrious Italian citizen and prophet, Guiseppe Mazzini, called them. Immediately inspired by God himself and supported upon universal consent expressed by popular suffrage, *DIO E POPOLO*, such as these should be called to the government of human societies.

But here we are again, fallen back under the yoke of church and state. It is true that in this new organization, indebted for its existence, like all the old political organizations, to the "grace of God," but supported this time—at least so far as form is concerned, as a necessary concession to the spirit of modern times, and just as in the preambles of the imperial decrees of Napoleon III—on the pretended will of the people, the Church will no longer call itself Church; it will call itself School. What matters it? On the benches of this school will be seated not children only; there will be found the eternal minor, the pupil confessedly forever incompetent to pass his examinations, rise to the knowledge of his teachers, and dispense with their discipline—the people. The state will no longer call itself monarchy; it will call itself republic; but it will be none the less the State,—that is, a tutelage officially and regularly established by a minority of competent men, men of genius, talent, or virtue, who will watch and guide the conduct of this great, this incorrigible and terrible child, the people. The professors of the School and the functionaries of the State will call themselves republicans; but they will be none the less tutors, shepherds, and the people will remain what they have been hitherto—a flock. A warning to the shorn, for where there is a flock there necessarily must be shepherds also to shear and devour it. The people, in this system, will be the perpetual scholar and pupil. In spite of its sovereignty, wholly fictitious, it will continue to serve as the instrument of thoughts, wills, and conse-

quently interests not its own. Between this situation and what we call liberty, the only real liberty, there is an abyss. It will be the old oppression and the old slavery under new forms; and where there is slavery there is misery, brutishness, real social materialism, privileged classes on the one hand and the masses on the other.

In deifying human things the idealists always end in the triumph of a brutal materialism. And this for a very simple reason: the divine evaporates and rises to its own country, heaven; while the brutal alone remains actually on earth.

One day I asked Mazzini what measures would be taken for the emancipation of the people, once his triumphant unitary republic had been definitely established.

"The first measure," he answered, "will be the foundation of schools for the people."

"And what will the people be taught in these schools?"

"The duties of man—sacrifice and devotion."

But where will you find a sufficient number of professors to teach these things, which no one has the right or power to teach, unless he preaches by example? Is not the number of men who find supreme enjoyment in sacrifice and devotion exceedingly limited? Those who sacrifice themselves in the service of a great idea obey a lofty passion, and, satisfying this personal passion, outside of which life itself loses all value in their eyes, they generally think of something else than building their action into doctrine, while those who teach doctrine usually forget to translate it into action, for the simple reason that doctrine kills the life, the living spontaneity of action. Men like Mazzini, in which doctrine and action form an admirable unity, are very rare exceptions. In Christianity also there have been great men, holy men, who have really practiced, or who, at least, have passionately tried to practice all that they preached, and whose hearts, overflowing with love, were full of contempt for the pleasures and goods of this world. But the immense majority of Catholic and Protestant priests who, by trade, have preached and still preach the doctrines of chastity, abstinence and renunciation belie their teachings by their example. It is not without reason, but because of several centuries of experience, that among the people of all countries these phrases have become by-words: "As licentious as a priest; as gluttonous as a priest; as ambitious as a priest; as greedy, selfish and grasping as a priest." It is, then, established that the professors of Christian virtues, consecrated by the church, the priests, in the immense majority of cases, have practiced quite the contrary of what they have preached. This vast majority, the universality of this fact, shows that the fault is not to be attributed to them as individuals, but to the social position, impossible and contradictory in itself, in which these individuals are placed.

The position of the Christian priest involves a double contradiction. In the first place, that between the doctrine of abstinence and renunciation and the positive needs and tendencies of human nature,—tendencies and needs which, in some individual cases, always very rare, may indeed be continually ignored, suppressed, and even entirely annihilated by the constant influence of some potent intellectual and moral passion; which at certain moments of collective exaltation, may be forgotten and neglected for some time by a large mass of men at once; but which are so fundamentally inherent in our nature that sooner or later they always resume their rights: so that, when they are not satisfied in a regular and normal way, they are always replaced at last by unwholesome and monstrous satisfactions. This is a natural and consequently fatal and irresistible law, under the disastrous

action of which inevitably fall all Christian priests and especially those of the Roman Catholic church.

But there is another contradiction common to the priests of both sects. This contradiction grows out of the very title and position of master. A master who commands, oppresses and exploits is a wholly logical and quite natural personage. But a master who sacrifices himself to those who are subordinated to him by his divine or human privileges is a contradictory and quite impossible being. This is the very constitution of hypocrisy, so well personified by the Pope, who, while calling himself "the lowest servant of the servants of God," in token whereof, following the example of Christ, he even washes once a year the feet of twelve Roman beggars, proclaims himself at the same time vicar of God, absolute and infallible master of the world. Do I need to recall that the priests of all churches, far from sacrificing themselves to the flocks confided to their care, have always sacrificed them, exploited them, and kept them in a condition of a flock, partly to satisfy their own personal passions and partly to serve the omnipotence of the Church? Like conditions, like causes, always produce like effects. It will, then, be the same with the professors of the modern School divinely inspired and licensed by the State. They will necessarily become, some without knowing it, others with full knowledge of the cause, teachers of the doctrine of popular sacrifice to the power of the State and to the profit of the privileged classes.

Must we, then, eliminate from society all instruction and abolish all schools? Far from it! Instruction must be spread among the masses without stint, transforming all the churches, all those temples dedicated to the glory of God and to the slavery of men, into so many schools of human emancipation. But, in the first place, let us understand each other; schools, properly speaking, in a normal society founded on equality and on respect for human liberty, will exist only for children and not for adults; and, in order that they may become schools of emancipation and not enslavement, it will be necessary to eliminate, first of all, this fiction of God, the eternal and absolute enslaver. The whole education and instruction of children must be founded on the scientific development of reason, not on that of faith; on the development of personal dignity and independence, not on that of piety and obedience; on the worship of justice and truth at any cost, and above all on respect for humanity, which must replace always and everywhere the worship of divinity. The principle of authority, in the education of children, constitutes the natural point of departure; it is legitimate, necessary, when applied to children of tender age, whose intelligence has not yet openly developed itself. But as the development of everything, and consequently of education, implies the gradual negation of the point of departure, this principle must disappear as fast as education and instruction advance, giving place to increasing liberty.

All rational education is at bottom nothing but this progressive immolation of authority for the benefit of liberty, the final object of education necessarily being the formation of free men full of respect and love for the liberty of others. Therefore the first day of the scholar's life, if the school takes infants scarcely able as yet to stammer a few words, should be that of its greatest authority and an almost entire absence of liberty; but its last day should be that of the greatest liberty and the absolute abolition of every vestige of the animal or divine principle of authority.

The principle of authority, applied to men who have surpassed or attained their majority, becomes a monstrosity, a flagrant denial of humanity, a source of slavery and moral and intellectual depravity. Unfortunately paternal governments have left the popular masses to wallow in an ignor-

ance so profound that it will be necessary to establish schools not only for the people's children, but for the people themselves. From these schools will be absolutely eliminated the smallest applications or manifestations of the principle of authority. They will be schools no longer; they will be popular academies, in which neither scholars or masters will be known, where the people will come freely to get, if they need it, free instruction, and in which, rich in their own experience, they will teach in their turn many things to the professors who shall bring them knowledge of what they lack. This, then, will be a mutual instruction, an act of intellectual fraternity between the educated youth and the people.

The real school for the people and for all grown men is life. The only grand and omnipotent authority, at once natural and rational, the only one which we may respect, will be that of the collective and public spirit of a society founded on the mutual respect of all its members. Yes, there is an authority which is not at all divine, wholly human, but before which we shall bow with courage, certain that, far from enslaving them, it will emancipate men. It will be a thousand times more powerful, be sure of it, than all your divine, theological, metaphysical, political and judicial authorities, established by the Church and by the State; more powerful than your criminal codes, your jailers and your executioners.

The power of the collective sentiment or public spirit is even now a very serious matter. The men most ready to commit crimes rarely dare to defy it, to openly affront it. They will seek to deceive it, but will take care not to be rude with it unless they feel the support of a minority larger or smaller. No man, however powerful he believes himself, will even have the strength to bear the unanimous contempt of society; no one can live without feeling himself sustained by the approval and esteem of at least some portion of society. A man must be urged on by an immense and very sincere conviction in order to find courage to speak and act against the opinion of all, and never will a depraved, selfish and cowardly man have such courage.

Nothing proves more clearly than this fact the natural and inevitable solidarity which binds all men together. Each of us can verify this law daily, both on himself and on all the men whom he knows. But, if this social power exists, why has it not sufficed hitherto to moralize, to humanize men? Simply because hitherto this power has not been humanized itself; it has not been humanized because the social life of which it is ever the faithful expression is based, as we know, on the worship of divinity, not on respect for humanity; on authority, not on liberty; on privilege, not on equality; on exploitation, not on the brotherhood of men; on iniquity and falsehood, not on justice and truth. Consequently its real action, always in contradiction of the humanitarian theories which it professes, has constantly exercised a disastrous and depraving influence. It does not repress vices and crimes; it creates them. Its authority is consequently a divine, anti-human authority; its influence is mischievous and baleful. Do you wish to render its authority and influence beneficent and human? Achieve the social revolution. Make all needs really solidary* and cause the material and social interests of each to conform to the human duties of each. And to this end there is but one means: Destroy all the institutions of inequality; establish the economic and social equality of all, and on this basis will arise the liberty, the morality, the solidary humanity of all.

Yes, the necessary consequence of theoretical idealism is practically the most brutal materialism; not, undoubtedly, among those who sincerely preach it,—the usual result as far as they are concerned being that they are

*Adopted by the translator as an adjective. The noun form is solidarity.

constrained to see all their efforts struck with sterility,—but among those who try to realize their precepts in life, and in all society so far as it allows itself to be dominated by idealistic doctrines. To demonstrate this general fact, which may appear strange at first, but which explains itself naturally enough upon further reflection, historical proofs are not lacking.

Compare the last two civilizations of the ancient world—the Greek and the Roman. Which is the most materialistic, the most natural, in its point of departure, and the most humanly ideal in its results? Undoubtedly the Greek civilization. Which, on the contrary, is the most abstractly ideal in its point of departure,—sacrificing the material liberty of the man to the ideal liberty of the citizen, represented by the abstraction of the State,—and which became nevertheless the most brutal in its consequences? The Roman civilization, certainly. It is true that the Greek civilization, like all the ancient civilizations, including that of Rome, was exclusively national and based on slavery. But, in spite of these two immense defects, the former none the less conceived and realized the idea of humanity; it ennobled and really idealized the life of men; it transformed human herds into free associations of free men; it created through liberty the sciences, the arts, a poetry, an immortal philosophy, and the primary concepts of human respect. With political and social liberty, it created free thought.

At the close of the Middle Ages, during the period of the Renaissance, the fact that some Greek emigrants brought a few of those immortal books into Italy sufficed to resuscitate life, liberty, thought, humanity buried in the dark dungeon of Catholicism. Human emancipation! That is the name of the Greek civilization. And the name of the Roman civilization? Conquest, with all its brutal consequences. And its last word? The omnipotence of the Cæsars. Which means the degradation and enslavement of nations and of men.

Today even, what is it that kills, what is it that crushes brutally, materially, in all European countries, liberty and humanity? It is the triumph of the Cæsarian or Roman principle.

Compare now two modern civilizations,—the Italian and the German. The first undoubtedly represents, in its general character, materialism; the second, on the contrary, represents idealism in its most abstract, most pure and most transcendental form. Let us see what are the practical fruits of the one and the other.

Italy has already rendered immense services to the cause of human emancipation. She was the first to resuscitate and widely apply the principle of liberty in Europe, and to restore to humanity its titles to nobility,—industry, commerce, poetry, the arts, the positive sciences, and free thought. Crushed since by three centuries of imperial and papal despotism, and dragged in the mud by her governing bourgeoisie, she reappears today, it is true, in a very degraded condition compared with what she once was. And yet how much she differs from Germany! In Italy, in spite of this decline—a decline temporarily let us hope—one may live and breathe humanly, surrounded by a people which seems to be born for liberty. Italy, even bourgeois Italy, can point you with pride to men like Mazzini and Garibaldi. In Germany one breathes the atmosphere of an immense political and social slavery, philosophically explained and accepted by a great people, with deliberate resignation and content. Her heroes—I speak always of present Germany, not the Germany of the future; of aristocratic, bureaucratic, political and bourgeois Germany, not the Germany of the proletaires—her heroes are quite the opposite of Mazzini and Garibaldi: they are William I., that ferocious and ingenuous representative of the Protestant God, Messrs. Bismark and Moltke, Generals Manteuffel and Werder. In all her international

relations Germany, from the beginning of her existence, has been slowly, systematically invading, conquering, ever ready to extend her own voluntary enslavement into the territory of her neighbors; and, since her definite establishment as a unitary power, she has become a menace, a danger to the liberty of entire Europe. Today Germany is servility brutal and triumphant.

To show how theoretical idealism incessantly and inevitably changes into practical materialism, one needs only to cite the example of all the Christian churches, and, naturally, first of all, that of the Apostolic and Roman church. What is there more sublime, in the ideal sense, more disinterested, more separate from all the interests of this earth, than the doctrine of Christ preached by that church? And what is there more brutally materialistic than the constant practice of that same church since the eighth century, from which dates her definite establishment as a power? What has been and still is the principal object of all her contests with the sovereigns of Europe? Her temporal goods, her revenues first, and then her temporal power, her political privileges.

We must do her the justice to acknowledge that she was the first to discover, in modern history, this incontestable but scarcely Christian truth that wealth and power, the economic exploitation and political oppression of the masses, are the two inseparable terms of the reign of divine ideality on earth: wealth consolidating and augmenting power, power ever discovering and creating new sources of wealth, and both assuring, better than the martyrdom and faith of the apostles, better than divine grace, the success of the Christian propagandism. This is a historical truth, and the Protestant churches, or rather sects, no longer fail to recognize it. I speak, of course, of the independent churches of England, America and Switzerland, not of the subjected churches of Germany. The latter have no initiative of their own; they do what their masters, their temporal sovereigns, who are at the same time their spiritual chieftains, order them to do. It is well known that the Protestant propagandism, especially in England and America, is very intimately connected with the propagandism of the material and commercial interests of those two great nations; and it is known also that the object of the latter propagandism is not at all the enrichment and material prosperity of the countries into which it penetrates in company with the Word of God, but rather the exploitation of those countries with a view to the enrichment and material prosperity of certain classes, which, in their own country, aim only at exploitation and pillage.

In a word, it is not at all difficult to prove, history in hand, that the Church, that all the churches, Christian and non-Christian, by the side of their spiritualistic propagandism and probably to accelerate and consolidate the success thereof, have never neglected to organize themselves into great corporations for the economic exploitation of the masses under the protection and with the direct and special blessing of some divinity or other; that all the states, which originally, as we know, with all their political and judicial institutions and their dominant and privileged classes, have been only temporal branches of these various churches, have likewise had principally in view this same exploitation for the benefit of lay minorities indirectly sanctioned by the church; finally and in general, that the action of the good God and of all the divine idealities on earth has ended at last, always and everywhere, in founding the prosperous materialism of the few over the fanatical and constantly famishing idealism of the masses.

We have a new proof in this in what we see today. With the exception of the great hearts and great minds whom I have before referred to as misled, who are today the most obstinate defenders of idealism? In the first place, all the sovereign courts. In France, until lately, Napoleon III and

his wife, Madame Eugenie; all their former ministers, courtiers and marshals, from Rouher and Bazine to Fleury and Pietri; the men and women of the imperial official world, who have so completely idealized and saved France; their journals and their savants—the Cassagnacs, the Girardins, the Duvernois, the Veuillots, the Leverries, the Dumas; the black phalanx of Jesuits and Jesuitesses in every garb; the whole upper and middle bourgeoisie of France; the doctrinaire liberals, and the liberals without doctrine—the Guizots, the Thiers, the Jules Favres, the Pelletans, and the Jules Simons, all obstinate defenders of the bourgeois exploitation. In Prussia, in Germany, William I., the present royal demonstrator of the good God on earth; all his generals, all his officers Pomperanian and other, all his army, which, strong in its religious faith, has just conquered France in that ideal way we know so well. In Russia, the czar and all his court; the Mouravieffs and the Bergs, all the butchers and pious proselyters of Poland. Everywhere, in short, religious and philosophical idealism, the one being the more or less free translation of the other, serves today as the flag of material exploitation; while, on the contrary, the flag of theoretical materialism, the red flag of economic equality and social justice, is raised by the practical idealism of the oppressed and famishing masses, tending to realize the greatest liberty and the human right of each in the fraternity of all men on the earth. Who are the real idealists—the idealists not of abstraction, but of life; not of heaven, but of earth—and who are the materialists?

It is evident that the essential condition of theoretical or divine idealism is the sacrifice of logic, of human reason, the renunciation of science. We see, further, that in defending the doctrines of idealism one finds himself enlisted perforce in the ranks of the oppressors and exploiters of the popular masses. These are the two great reasons which, it would seem, should be sufficient to drive every great mind, every great heart, from idealism. How does it happen that our illustrious contemporary idealists, who certainly lack neither mind, nor heart, nor goodwill, and who have devoted their entire existence to the service of humanity,—how does it happen that they persist in remaining among the representatives of a doctrine henceforth condemned and dishonored?

They must be influenced by a very powerful motive. It cannot be logic or science, since logic and science have pronounced their verdict against the idealistic doctrine. No more can it be personal interests, since these men are infinitely above everything of that sort. It must then be a powerful moral motive. Which? There can be but one. These illustrious men think, no doubt, that idealistic theories or beliefs are essentially necessary to the moral dignity and grandeur of man, and that materialistic theories, on the contrary, reduce him to the level of the beasts.

And if the truth were just the opposite!

Every development, I have said, implies the negation of its point of departure. The basis or point of departure, according to the materialistic school, being material, the negation must be necessarily ideal. Starting from the totality of the real world, or from what is abstractly called matter, it logically arrives at the real idealization—that is, at the humanization, at the full and complete emancipation—of society. Per contra and for the same reason, the basis and point of departure of the idealistic school being the ideal, it arrives necessarily at the materialization of society, at the organization of a brutal despotism and an iniquitous and ignoble exploitation, under the form of Church and State. The historical development of man according to the materialistic school, is a progressive ascension; in the idealistic system it can be nothing but a continuous fall.

Whatever human question we may desire to consider, we always find

this same essential contradiction between the two schools. Thus, as I have already observed, materialism starts from animality to establish humanity; idealism starts from divinity to establish slavery and condemn the masses to an endless animality. Materialism denies free will and ends in the establishment of liberty; idealism, in the name of human dignity, proclaims free will, and on the ruins of every liberty founds authority. Materialism rejects the principle of authority, because it rightly considers it as the corollary of animality, and because, on the contrary, the triumph of humanity, the object and chief significance of history, can be realized only through liberty. In a word, you will always find the idealists in the very act of practical materialism, while you will see the materialists pursuing and realizing the most grandly ideal aspirations and thoughts.

History, in the system of the idealists, as I have said, can be nothing but a continuous fall. They begin by a terrible fall, from which they never recover,—by *salto mortale* from the sublime regions of pure and absolute idea into matter. And into what kind of matter? Not into the matter which is eternally active and mobile, full of properties and forces, of life and intelligence, as we see it in the real world; but into abstract matter, impoverished and reduced to absolute misery, as conceived by the theologians and metaphysicians, who have stripped it of everything to give everything to their emperor, to their God; into the matter which, deprived of all action and movement of its own, represents, in opposition to the divine idea, nothing but stupidity, impenetrability, absolute inertia and immotility.

The fall is so terrible that divinity, the divine person or idea, is flattened out, loses consciousness of itself, and never more recovers it. And in this desperate situation it is still forced to work miracles! For from the moment matter becomes inert, every movement that takes place in the world, even the most material, is a miracle, can result only from providential intervention, from the action of God upon matter. And there this poor Divinity, half annihilated by its fall, lies some thousands of centuries in this swoon, then awakens slowly, in vain endeavoring to grasp some vague memory of itself, and every move that it makes in this direction upon matter becomes a creation, a new formation, a new miracle. In this way it passes through all degrees of materiality and bestiality—first, gas, simple or compound and chemical substance, mineral, it then spreads over the earth as vegetable and animal organization until it concentrates itself in man. Here it would seem as if it must become itself again, for it lights in every human being an angelic spark, a particle of its own divine being, the immortal soul.

How did it manage to lodge a thing absolutely immaterial in a thing absolutely material; how can the body contain, enclose, limit, paralyze pure spirit? This, again, is one of those questions which faith alone, that prejudiced and stupid affirmation of the absurd, can solve. It is the greatest of miracles. Here, however, we have only to establish the effects, the practical consequences of this miracle.

After thousands of centuries of vain efforts to come back to itself, Divinity, lost and scattered in the matter which it animates and sets in motion, finds a point of support, a sort of focus for self-concentration. This focus is man, his immortal soul singularly imprisoned in a mortal body. But each man considered individually is infinitely too limited, too small, to enclose the divine immensity; it can contain only a very small particle, immortal like the Whole. It follows that the divine being, absolutely immaterial Being, Mind, is divisible like matter. Another mystery whose solution must be left to faith.

If God entire could find lodgement in each man, then each man would be God. We should have an immense quantity of Gods, each limited by all the

others and yet none the less infinite—a contradiction which would imply a mutual destruction of men, an impossibility of the existence of more than one. As for the particles, that is another matter; nothing more rational, indeed, than that one particle should be limited by another and be smaller than the whole. Only, here another contradiction confronts us. To be greater and smaller are only attributes of matter, not of mind as the idealists understand it. According to the materialists, it is true, mind is only the working of the wholly material organism of man, and the greatness or smallness of mind depends on the greater or less perfection of the human organism. But these same attributes of relative limitation and grandeur cannot be attributed to mind as the idealists conceive it, absolutely immaterial mind, mind existing independent of matter. There can be neither greater nor smaller nor any limit among minds, for there is only one Mind—God. To add that the infinitely small and limited particles which constitute human souls are at the same time immortal is to carry the contradiction to a climax. But this is a question of faith. Let us pass on.

Here then we have Divinity torn up and lodged, in infinitely small particles, in an immense number of beings of all sexes, ages, races, and color. This is an excessively inconvenient and unhappy situation, for the divine particles are so little acquainted with each other at the outset of their human existence, that they begin by devouring each other. Moreover in the midst of this state of barbarism and wholly animal brutality, these divine particles, retain as it were a vague resemblance of their primitive divinity, and are irresistibly drawn towards their Whole; they seek each other, their Whole. It is Divinity itself, scattered and lost in the material world, which looks for itself in men, and it is so brutalized by this multitude of human prisons in which it finds itself strewn, that, in looking for itself, it commits folly upon folly.

Begining with fetishism, it searches for and adores itself, now in a stone, now in a piece of wood, now in a dishcloth. It is quite likely that it never would have succeeded in getting out of the dishcloth, if the other divinity which was not allowed to fall into matter and which is kept in the state of pure spirit in the sublime heights of the absolute ideal, or in the celestial regions, had not had pity on it.

Here is a new mystery,—that of Divinity dividing itself into two halves, both equally infinite, of which one—God the Father—stays in the purely immaterial regions, and the other—God the Son—falls into matter. We shall see directly, between these two Divinities separated from each other, continuous relations established, from above to below and from below to above; and these relations, considered as a single eternal and constant act, will constitute the Holy Ghost. Such, in its veritable theological and metaphysical meaning, is the great, the terrible mystery of the Christian Trinity.

But let us loose no time in abandoning those heights to see what is going on upon earth.

God the Father, seeing from the heights of his eternal splendor, that the poor God the son, flattened out and astounded by his fall, is plunged in matter that, having reached the human state, he has not yet recovered himself, decides to come to his aid. From this immense number of particles at once immortal, divine and infinitely small, in which God the son has disseminated himself so thoroughly that he does not know himself, God the Father chooses those most pleasing to him, picks his inspired persons, his prophets, his men of virtuous genius, the great benefactors and legislators of humanity: Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Confucius, Lycurgus, Solon, Socrates, the divine Plato, and above all Jesus Christ (the complete realization of God the Son, at last collected and concentrated in a single human

person), all the apostles, Saint Peter, Saint Paul and Saint John, Constantine the Great, Mahomet, then Gregory VII., Charlemagne, Dante, and, according to some, Luther also, Voltaire and Rousseau, Robespierre and Danton, and many other great and holy personages, all of whose names it is impossible to recapitulate, but among whom I, as a Russian, beg that Saint Nicholas may not be forgotten.

Then we have reached at last the manifestation of God upon earth. But immediately God appears, man is reduced to nothing. It will be said that he is not reduced to nothing, since he is himself a particle of God. Pardon me! I admit that a particle of a definite, limited whole, however small it may be, is a quantity, a positive greatness. But a particle of the infinitely great, compared with it, is infinitely small. Multiply billions of billions by billions of billions—their product compared to the infinitely great will be infinitely small, and the infinitely small is equal to zero. God is everything; therefore man and the real world, the universe, are nothing. You will not escape this conclusion.

God appears, man is reduced to nothing; and the greater Divinity becomes, the more miserable becomes humanity. That is the history of all religions; that is the effect of all the divine inspirations and legislations. In history the name of God is the terrible club with which men variously inspired, great geniuses, have beaten down the liberty, dignity, reason, and prosperity of men.

We had first the fall of God. Now we have a fall which interests us more—that of man; caused solely by the apparition of God manifested on earth.

See in how profound an error our dear and illustrious idealists find themselves. In talking to us of God they purpose, they desire, to elevate us, emancipate us, ennoble us, and, on the contrary, they crush and degrade us. With the name of God they imagine that they can establish fraternity among men, and, on the contrary, they create pride, contempt; they sow discord, hatred, war; they establish slavery. For with God come the different degrees of divine inspiration; humanity is divided into men highly inspired, less inspired, uninspired. All are equally insignificant before God, it is true; but compared with each other, some are greater than others; not only in fact—which would be of no consequence, because inequality in fact is lost in the collectivity when it cannot cling to some legal fiction or institution—but by the divine right of inspiration, which immediately establishes a fixed, constant, petrified inequality. The highly inspired must be listened to and obeyed by the less inspired and the uninspired. Thus we have the principle of authority well established, and with it the two fundamental institutions of slavery—Church and State.

Of all despotisms that of the doctrinaires or inspired religionists is the worst. They are so jealous of the glory of their God and of the triumph of their ideas that they have no heart left for the liberty or the dignity or even the sufferings of living men, of real men. Divine zeal, preoccupation with the ideal, finally dry up the tenderest souls, the most compassionate hearts, the sources of human love. Considering all that is, all that happens, in the world from the point of view of eternity or of the abstract idea, they treat passing matters with disdain; but the whole life of real men, of men of flesh and bone, is composed only of passing matters; they themselves are only passing beings, who, once, passed, are replaced by others likewise passing, but never to return in person. Alone permanently and relatively eternal is humanity, which steadily develops from one generation to another. I say **RELATIVELY** eternal, because, our planet once destroyed—it cannot fail to perish sooner or later, since everything which has begun must necessarily

end—our planet once decomposed, to serve undoubtedly as an element of some new formation in the system of the universe, which alone is really eternal, who knows what will become of our whole human development? Nevertheless, the moment of this dissolution being an enormous distance in the future, we may properly consider humanity, relatively to the short duration of human life, as eternal. But this very fact of progressive humanity is real and living only through its manifestations at definite times, in definite places, in really living men, and not through its general idea.

The general idea is always an abstraction and, for that very reason, in some sort a negation of real life. Science can grasp and name only the general significance of real facts, their relations, their laws—in short, that which is permanent in their continual transformations—but never their material, individual side, palpitating, so to speak, with reality and life, and therefore fugitive and intangible. Science comprehends the thought of the reality itself, the thought of life, not life. That is its limit, its only really insuperable limit, because it is founded on the very nature of thought, which is the only organ of science.

Upon this nature are based the indisputable rights and grand mission of science, but also its vital impotence and even its mischievous action whenever, through its official licensed representatives, it arrogantly claims the right to govern life. The mission of science is to establish the general laws inherent in the development of the phenomena of the physical and social world; it fixes, so to speak, the unchangeable landmarks of humanity's progressive march by indicating the general conditions which it is necessary to rigorously observe and always fatal to ignore or forget. In a word, science is the compass of life; but it is not life. Science is unchangeable, impersonal, general, abstract, insensible, like the laws of which it is the ideal reproduction, reflected or mental—that is, cerebral (using the word to remind us that science itself is but a product of a material organ, the brain). Life is wholly fugitive and temporary, but also wholly palpitating with reality and individuality, sensibilities, sufferings, joys, aspirations, needs and passions. It alone spontaneously creates real things and beings. Science creates nothing; it establishes and recognizes only the creations of life. And every time that scientific men, emerging from their abstract world, mingle with living creation in the real world, all that they propose to create is poor, ridiculously abstract, bloodless and lifeless, still-born, like the homunculus created by Wagner, the pedantic disciple of the immortal Doctor Faust. It follows that the only mission of science is to enlighten life, not to govern it.

The government of science and of men of science, even be they Positivists, disciples of Auguste Comte, or again, disciples of the doctrinaire school of German communism, cannot fail to be impotent, ridiculous, inhuman, cruel, oppressive, exploiting, maleficent. We may say of men of science, as such, what I have said of theologians and metaphysicians: they have neither sense nor heart for individual and living beings. We cannot even blame them for this, for it is the natural consequence of their profession. In so far as they are men of science, they can take interest in nothing except generalities, absolute laws, and have no consideration for anything else.

Real and living individuality is perceptible only to another living individuality, not to a thinking individuality, nor to the man who, by a series of abstractions, puts himself outside of and above immediate contact with life; to such men it can exist only as a more or less perfect example of the species—that is, of a definite abstraction. If it is a rabbit, for instance, the finer the example, the more joyfully will the savant dissect it in the hope of determining by this very destruction the general nature, the law, of the species. If there were no one to oppose it, should we not find, even in these days, a

number of fanatics capable of performing the same experiments upon man? And if, moreover, the naturalists do not dissect living man, they are stopped from doing so, not by science, but by the omnipotent protests of life. Although they pass three-fourths of their existence in study and in existing organization form a sort of world apart—which impairs at once the soundness of their hearts and of their minds—they are not exclusively men of science, but are also more or less men of life.

Nevertheless we must not rely on this. Though we may be well nigh certain that a savant would not dare to treat a man today as he treats a rabbit, it remains always to be feared that the savants as a body may submit living men to scientific experiments, undoubtedly interesting, but none the less disagreeable to their victims. If they cannot perform experiments upon the bodies of individuals, they will ask nothing better than to perform them on the social body, and that is what must be absolutely prevented.

In their existing organization, monopolizing science and remaining thus outside of social life, the savants form a separate caste, in many respects analogous to the priesthood. Scientific abstraction is their God, individualities are their victims, and they are the licensed sacrificers.

Science cannot go outside of the sphere of abstractions. In this respect it is decidedly inferior to art, which, in its turn, is peculiarly concerned only with general types and general situations, but which incarnates them by an artifice of its own. To be sure, these forms of art are not life, but they none the less excite in our imagination the memory and sentiment of life; art in a certain sense, individualizes the types and situations which it conceives; by means of the individualities without flesh and bone, and consequently permanent and immortal, which it has the power to create, it recalls to our minds the living, real individualities which appear and disappear under our eyes. Art, then, is the perpetual immolation of life, fugitive, temporary, but real, on the altar of eternal abstractions.

Science is as incapable of grasping the individuality of a man as that of a rabbit. Not that it is ignorant of the principle of individuality; it conceives it perfectly as a principle, but not as a fact. It knows very well that all the animal species, including the human species, have no real existence outside a definite number of individuals, born and dying to make room for new individuals equally fugitive. It knows that in rising from the animal species to the superior species the principle of individuality becomes more pronounced; the individuals appear freer and more complete. It knows that man, the last and most perfect animal of earth, presents the most complete and most remarkable individuality, because of his power to conceive, personify, as it were, in his social and private existence, the universal law. It knows, finally, when it is not vitiated by theological or metaphysical, political or judicial doctrinarism, or even by a narrow pride, when it is not deaf to the instincts and aspirations of life—it knows (and this is its last word) that respect for man is the supreme law of humanity, and the great, the real object of history, its only legitimate object, is the humanization and emancipation, the real liberty, the prosperity of each individual living in society. For, if we would not fall back into the liberticidal fictions of the public welfare represented by the State, fictions always founded the systematic sacrifice of the people, we must clearly recognize that collective liberty and prosperity exist only so far as they represent the sum of individual liberties and prosperities.

Science knows all these things, but it does not and cannot go beyond them. Abstraction being its very nature, it can well enough conceive the principle of real and living individuality, but it can have no dealings with real and living individuals; it concerns itself with individuals in general,

but not with Peter or James, not with such or such a one, who, so far as it is concerned, do not, cannot have any existence. Its individuals, I repeat, are only abstractions.

Now, history is made, not by abstract individualities, but by acting and living individuals. Abstractions advance only when born forward by real men. For these beings made, not in idea only, but in reality of flesh and blood, science has no heart; it considers them at most as material for intellectual and social development. What does it care for the particular conditions and chance fate of Peter and James? It would make itself ridiculous, it would abdicate, it would annihilate itself, if it wished to concern itself with them otherwise than as examples in support of its eternal theories. And it would be ridiculous to wish it to do so, for it obeys its own laws. It cannot grasp the concrete; it can move only in abstractions. Its mission is to busy itself with the situation and the general conditions of the existence and development, either of the human species in general, or of such a race, such a people, such a class or category of individuals; the general causes of their prosperity, their decline, and the best general methods of securing their progress in all ways. Provided it accomplishes this task broadly and rationally, it will do its whole duty, and it would be really unjust to expect more of it. But it would be equally ridiculous, it would be disastrous to entrust it with a mission which it is incapable of fulfilling, since its own nature forces it to ignore the existence and fate of Peter and James. It would continue to ignore them; but its licensed representatives, men not at all abstract, but on the contrary in very active life and having very substantial interests, yielding to the pernicious influence which privilege inevitably exercises upon men, would finally fleece other men in the name of science, just as they have been fleeced hitherto by priests, politicians of all shades, and lawyers, in the name of God, of the State, of Judicial Right.

What I preach, then, to a certain extent, is the revolt of life against science, or rather against the government of science, not to destroy science—that would be high treason to humanity—but to remand it to its place so that it can never leave it again. Until now all human history has been only a perpetual and bloody immolation of millions of poor human beings in honor of some pitiless abstraction—God, country, power of state, national honor, historical rights, judicial rights, public liberty, public welfare. Such has been up to date the natural, spontaneous and inevitable movement of human societies. We cannot undo it; we must submit to it so far as the past is concerned, as we submit to all actual fatalities. We must believe that that was the only possible way to educate the human race. For we must not deceive ourselves; even in attributing the larger part to the machiavelian wiles of the governing classes, we have to recognize that no minority would have been powerful enough to impose all these horrible sacrifices upon the masses, if there had not been in the masses themselves a dizzy spontaneous movement which pushed them on to continual self-sacrifice, now to one, now to another of these devouring abstractions, the vampires of history, ever nourished upon human blood.

We readily understand that this is very gratifying to the theologians, politicians, and jurists. Priests of these abstractions, they live only by the continual immolation of the popular masses. Nor is it more surprising that metaphysics, too, should give its consent. Its only mission is to justify and rationalize as far as possible the iniquitous and absurd. But that positive science itself should have shown the same tendencies is a fact which we must deplore while we establish it. That it has done so is due to two reasons: in the first place, because, constituted outside of life, it is represented by a privileged body, and in the second place, because thus for it has posited

itself as the absolute and final object of all human development. By a judicious criticism, which it can and finally will be forced to pass upon itself, it would understand, on the contrary, that it is only a means for the realization of a much higher object—that of the complete humanization of all the real individuals who are born, who live, and who die, on earth.

The immense advantage of positive science over theology, metaphysics, politics and judicial right, consists in this—that, in place of the false and fatal abstractions set up by these doctrines, it posits true abstractions which express the general nature and logic of things, their general relations, and the general laws of their development. This it is which will assure it forever a great position in society: it will constitute in a certain sense society's collective consciousness. But there is one aspect in which it resembles all the doctrines which preceded it: its only possible object being abstractions, it is forced by its very nature to ignore real men, outside of whom the truest abstractions have no existence. To remedy this radical defect the science of the future will proceed by a different method from that followed by the doctrines of the past. The latter have taken advantage of the ignorance of the masses to sacrifice them with voluptuousness to their abstractions, which, by the way are very lucrative to those who represent them in flesh and bone. Positive science, recognizing its absolute inability to conceive real individuals and interest itself in their lot, must definitely and absolutely renounce all claim to the government of societies; for, if it should meddle therein, it would only sacrifice continually the living men whom it ignores to the abstractions which constitute the sole object of its legitimate preoccupations.

The true science of history does not yet exist; scarcely do we begin to-day to catch a glimpse of its extremely complicated conditions. But suppose it were definitely developed; what would it give us? It would exhibit a faithful and rational picture of the natural development of the general conditions—material and ideal, economical, political and social; religious, philosophical, æsthetic and scientific—of the societies which have a history. But this universal picture of human civilization, however detailed it might be, would never show anything beyond general and consequently abstract estimates. The billions of individuals who have furnished living and suffering matter with this history at once triumphant and dismal—triumphant through the immense hecatomb of human victims “crushed under its car,”—those billions of obscure individuals, without whom none of the great abstract results of history would have been obtained—and who, bear in mind, have never benefited by any of these results—will find no place, not even the slightest, in our annals. They have lived and been crushed for the good of abstract humanity; that is all!

Shall we blame the science of history? That would be unjust and ridiculous. Individuals cannot grasp by thought, by reflection, or even by human speech, which is capable of expressing abstractions only; they cannot be grasped in the present day any more than in the past. Therefore social science itself, the science of the future, will necessarily continue to ignore them. All that we have a right to demand of it is that it shall point us with faithful and sure hand to the general causes of individual suffering—among these causes it will not forget the immolation and subordination (still to frequent, alas!) of living individuals to abstract generalities—at the same time showing us the general conditions necessary to the real emancipation of the individuals living in society. That is its mission; those are its limits, beyond which the action of social science can be only impotent and fatal. Beyond those limits begin the doctrinaire and governmental pretensions of its licensed representatives, its priests. It is time to have done with these pontiffs, even though they call themselves social democrats. Once more, the sole mission

of science is to light the road. Only Life, delivered from all its governmental and doctrinaire barriers, and given full liberty of action, can create.

How solve this antinomy?

On the one hand, science is indispensable to the rational organization of society; on the other, it is incapable of interesting itself in that which is real and living.

This contradiction can be solved only in one way; science must no longer remain outside the life of all, represented by a body of licensed savants, but must take root and spread among the masses. Science being called upon to henceforth represent society's collective consciousness, must really become the property of everybody. Thereby, without losing anything of its universal character, of which it can never divest itself without ceasing to be science, and while continuing to concern itself exclusively with general causes, the conditions and fixed relations of individuals and things, it will take root in the immediate and real life of all individuals. That will be a movement analogous to that which said to the preachers at the beginning of the Reformation that there was no further need of priests for man, who would thenceforth be his own priest, every man, thanks to the invisible intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ, having at last succeeded in swallowing his good God.

But here the question is not of Jesus Christ, nor of the good God, nor of political liberty, nor of judicial right—things all theologically or metaphysically revealed, and all alike mentally indigestible. The world of scientific abstraction is not revealed; it is inherent in the real world, of which it is only the general or abstract expression and representation: otherwise it forms a separate region, specially represented by the savants as a body, in which case this ideal world threatens to take the place of a good God to the real world, reserving for its licensed representatives the office of priests. That is the reason why it is necessary to dissolve the special organization of the savants by general instruction, equal for all in all things, in order that masses, ceasing to be flocks led and shorn by privileged priests, may take into their own hands the direction of their destinies.*

But until the masses shall have reached this degree of instruction, will it be necessary to leave them to the government of scientific men? Certainly not. It would be better for them to dispense with science than allow themselves to be governed by savants. The first consequence of the government of these men would be to render science inaccessible to the people, because the existing scientific institutions are essentially aristocratic. An aristocracy of learning! from the practical point of view the most implacable, and from the social point of view the most haughty and insulting—such would be the power established in the name of science. This regime would be capable of paralyzing the life and movement of society. The savants, always presumptuous, ever self-sufficient, and ever impotent, would desire to meddle with everything, and the sources of life would dry up under the breath of their abstractions.

Once more, Life, not science, creates life; the spontaneous action of the people themselves alone can create liberty. Undoubtedly it would be a very fortunate thing if science could, from this day forth, illuminate the sponta-

*Science, in becoming the patrimony of every body, will wed itself in a certain sense to the immediate and real life of each. It will gain in utility and grace what it loses in pride, ambition and doctrinaire pedantry. This, however, will not prevent men of genius, better organized for scientific speculation than the majority of their fellows, from devoting themselves exclusively to the cultivation of the sciences, and rendering great services to humanity. Only, they will be ambitious for no other social influence than the natural influence exercised upon its surroundings by every superior intelligence, and for no other reward than the satisfaction of a noble enthusiasm.

neous march of the people toward their emancipation. But better an absence of light than a trembling and uncertain light, serving only to mislead these who follow it. Not in vain have the people traversed a long, historic career, and paid for their error by centuries of misery. The practical summary of their painful experiences constitutes a sort of traditional science, which, in certain respects is worth as much as theoretical science. Last of all, a portion of the youth—those of the bourgeois students who feel hatred enough for the falsehood, hypocrisy, injustice and cowardice of the bourgeoisie to find courage to turn their backs upon it, and passion enough to unreservedly embrace the just and human cause of the proletariat—those will be, as I have already said, fraternal instructors of the people; thanks to them, there will be no occasion for the government of the savants.

If the people should beware of the government of the savants, all the more should they provide against that of the inspired idealists.

The more sincere the believers and the priests of heaven, the more dangerous they become. The scientific abstraction, I have said, is a rational abstraction, true in its essence, necessary to life, of which it is the theoretical representation, or, if one prefers, the conscience. It may, it must be, absorbed and directed by life. The idealistic abstraction, God, is a corrosive poison, which destroys and decomposes life, falsifies and kills it. The pride of the savants, being nothing but a personal arrogance, can be bent and broken. The pride of the idealists, not being personal but divine, is irascible and inexorable: it may, it must, die, but it will never yield, and, while it has a breath left, it will try to subject men to its God. The result of the faith is always slavery, and at the same time the triumph of the ugliest and most brutal materialism.

Man, like all living nature, is an entirely material being. The mind, the faculty of thinking, of receiving and reflecting upon different external and internal sensations, of remembering them when they have passed and reproducing them by the imagination, of comparing and distinguishing them, of abstracting determinations common to them and thus creating general concepts, and finally of forming ideas by grouping and combining concepts according to different methods—intelligence, in a word, sole creator of our whole ideal world, is a property of the animal body and especially of the cerebral organism. We know this certainly, by the experience of all, which no fact has ever contradicted and which any man can verify at any moment of his life. In all animals, without excepting the wholly inferior species, we find a certain degree of intelligence, and we see that, in the series of species, animal intelligence develops in proportion as the organization of a species approaches that of man, but in man alone it attains to that power of abstraction which properly constitutes thought.

Universal experience,* which is the sole origin, the source of all our knowledge, shows us, therefore, that all intelligence is always attached to some animal body, and that the intensity, the power, of animal function depend upon the relative perfection of the organism. This result of universal experience is not applicable only to the different animal species; we establish it likewise in men, whose intellectual and moral power depends so clearly upon the greater or less perfection of their organism as a race, as a nation, as a class and as individuals, that it is not necessary to insist on this point.†

*Universal experience, on which all science rests, must be clearly distinguished from universal faith, on which the idealists wish to support their beliefs: the first is a real authentication of facts; the second is only a supposition of facts which nobody has seen and which consequently are at variance with the experience of every body.

†The idealists, all those who believe in the immateriality and immortality of

On the other hand, it is certain that no man has ever seen or can see pure mind, detached from material form, existing separately from any animal body whatsoever. But if no person has seen it, how is it that men have come to believe in its existence? The fact of this belief is certain, and if not universal, as all the idealists pretend, at least very general, and as such it is entirely worthy of our closest attention. A general belief, however foolish it may be, exercises too potent a sway over the destiny of men to warrant us in ignoring it or putting it aside.

The explanation of this belief, moreover, is rational enough. The example afforded us by children and young people, and even by many men long past the age of majority, shows us that man may use his mental faculties for a long time before accounting to himself for the way in which he uses them. During this working of the mind unconscious of itself, during this action of innocent or believing intelligence, man, obsessed by the external world, pushed on by that eternal goad called life and its manifold necessities, creates a quantity of imaginations, concepts and ideas necessarily very imperfect at first and conforming but slightly to the reality of the things and facts which they endeavor to express. Not having yet the consciousness of his own intelligent action, not knowing yet that he himself has produced and continues to produce these imaginations, these concepts, these ideas, ignoring their wholly subjective—that is, human—origin, he must necessarily consider them as objective beings, as real beings, wholly independent of him, existing by themselves and in themselves.

It was thus that primitive peoples, emerging slowly from their animal innocence, created their gods. Having created them, not suspecting that they themselves were the real creators, they worshipped them; considering them as real beings infinitely superior to themselves, they attributed omnipotence to them, and recognized themselves as their creatures, their slaves. As fast as human ideas develop, the gods, who were never anything more than the fantastic, ideal, poetical revelation of an inverted image, become idealized also. At first gross fetiches, they gradually become pure spirits, existing outside of the visible world, and at last, in the course of history, are confounded in a single Divine Being, pure, eternal, absolute Spirit, creator and master of the worlds.

In every development, just or false, real or imaginary, collective or individual, it is always the first step that costs, the first act that is the most

the human soul must be excessively embarrassed by the difference in intelligence existing between races, peoples and individuals. Unless we suppose that the various particles have been irregularly distributed, how is this difference to be explained? Unfortunately there is a considerable number of men wholly stupid, foolish even to idiocy. Could they have received in the distribution a particle at once divine and stupid? To escape this embarrassment the idealists must necessarily suppose that all human souls are equal, but that the prisons in which they find themselves necessarily confined, human bodies, are unequal, some more capable than others of serving as an organ for the pure intellectuality of soul. According to this, such a one might have very fine organs at his disposition, such another very gross organs. But these are distinctions which Idealism has not the power to use without falling itself into inconsistency and the grossest materialism—for in the presence of absolute immateriality of soul all bodily differences disappear, all that is corporeal, material, necessarily appearing indifferent, equally and absolutely gross. The abyss which separates soul from body, absolute immateriality from absolute materiality, is infinite. Consequently all differences, although inexplicable and logically impossible, which may exist on the other side of the abyss, in matter, should be to the soul null and void and neither can nor should exercise any influence over it. In a word the absolutely immaterial cannot be constrained, imprisoned, and much less expressed in any degree whatsoever by the absolutely material. Of all the gross and materialistic (that is, brutal, using the word in the sense attached to it by the idealists) imaginations which were engendered by the primitive ignorance and stupidity of men, that of an immaterial soul imprisoned in a material body is certainly the grossest, the most stupid, and nothing better proves the omnipotence exercised by ancient prejudices even over the best minds than the sight of men endowed with lofty intelligence still talking of this bizarre union.

difficult. That step once taken, the rest follows naturally as a necessary consequence.

The difficult step in the historical development of this terrible religious insanity which continues to obsess us was to posit a divine world, as such, outside the real world. This first act of madness, so natural from the physiological point of view and consequently necessary in the history of humanity, was not accomplished at a single stroke. I know not how many centuries were needed to develop this belief and make it a governing influence upon the social customs of men. But, once established, it became omnipotent, as insanity necessarily becomes when it takes possession of man's brain. Take a madman—whatever the object of his madness—you will find that obscure and fixed idea which obsesses him seems to him the most natural thing in the world, and that, on the contrary, the real things which contradict this idea, seem to him ridiculous and odious follies. Well, religion is a collective insanity, the more powerful because it is traditional and because its origin is lost in the most remote antiquity. As collective insanity it has penetrated to the very depths of the public and private existence of the peoples; it is incarnate in society; it has become, so to speak, the collective soul and thought. Every man is enveloped in it from his birth; he sucks it in with his mother's milk, absorbs it with all that he touches, all that he sees. He is so exclusively fed upon it, so poisoned and penetrated by it in all his being, that later, however powerful his natural mind, he has to make unheard of efforts to deliver himself from it, and even then never completely succeeds.

The supernatural world, the divine world, once well established in the imagination of the peoples, the development of the various religious systems has followed its natural and logical course, conforming, moreover, in all things to the contemporary development of economical and political relations in which it has been in all ages, in the world of religious fancy, the faithful reproduction and divine consecration. Thus has the collective and historical insanity which calls itself religion been developed since fetishism, passing through all the stages from polytheism to Christian monotheism.

The second step in the development of religious beliefs, undoubtedly the most difficult next to the establishment of a separate divine world, was precisely this transition from polytheism to monotheism, from the religious materialism of the pagans to the spiritualistic faith of the Christians. The pagan gods—and this is their principal characteristic—were first of all exclusively national gods. Very numerous, they necessarily retained a more or less material character, or, rather, they were so numerous because they were material, diversity being one of the attributes of the real world. The pagan gods were not yet strictly the negation of real things; they were only a fantastic exaggeration of them.

We know how much this transition cost the Jewish people, constituting, so to speak, its entire history. In vain did Moses and the prophets preach the one God; the people always relapsed into their primitive idolatry, into the ancient and much more natural faith in several good gods, material, human, palpable. Jehova himself, their sole god, the god of Moses and the prophets, was still an extremely national god, serving only to reward and punish his faithful followers, his chosen people, with material arguments, often stupid, always gross and cruel. It does not even appear that faith in his existence implied a negation of the existence of earlier gods. The Jewish god did not deny the existence of these rivals; he simply did not want his people to worship them side beside with him. Jehova was a jealous god. His first commandment was this:

"I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Jehova, then was only a first draft, material and very rough, of modern idealism. Moreover, he was only a national god, like the Slavonic god worshipped by the generals, submissive and patient subjects of the emperor of all the Russias, like the German god proclaimed by the pietists and the German generals, subjects of William I., at Berlin. The supreme being cannot be a national god; he must be the god of entire humanity. Nor can the supreme being be a material being; he must be the negation of all matter—pure spirit. Two things have proved necessary to the realization of the worship of the supreme being: (1) a realization, such as it is, of humanity by the negation of nationalities and national forms of worship; (2) a development, already far advanced, of metaphysical ideas in order to spiritualize the gross Jehova of the Jews.

The first condition was fulfilled by the Romans, though in a very negative way no doubt, by the conquest of most of the countries known to the ancients and by the destruction of their national institutions. To them we owe the establishment of the altar of a sole and supreme god on the ruins of thousands of other altars. The gods of all the conquered nations, gathered in the Pantheon, mutually canceled each other. As for the second condition, the spiritualization of Jehova, that was realized by the Greeks long before the conquest of their country by the Romans. Greece, at the beginning of her history, had already received from the Orient, a divine world which had been definitely established in the traditional faith of her peoples. In this instinctive period, prior to her political history, she had developed and prodigiously humanized this divine world through her poets, and, when she actually began her history, she already had a religion ready-made, the most sympathetic and noble of all the religions which have existed, so far at least as a religion—that is, a lie—can be noble and sympathetic. Her great thinkers—and no nation had greater than Greece—found the divine world established, not only outside of themselves in the people, but also in themselves as a habit of feeling and thought, and naturally they took it as a point of departure. That they made no theology—that is, they did not wait in vain to reconcile dawning reason with the absurdities of such or such a god, as did the scholastics of the Middle Ages—was already much in their favor. They left the gods out of their speculations and attached themselves directly to the divine idea, one, invisible, omnipotent, eternal, absolutely spiritualistic and impersonal. The Greek metaphysicians, then, much more than the Jews, were the creators of a Christian god. The Jews only added to it the brutal personality of their Jehovah.

That a sublime genius like the divine Plato should have been absolutely convinced of the reality of the divine idea shows us how contagious, how omnipotent, is the tradition of the religious mania even on the greatest minds. Besides, we should not be surprised at it, since, even in our day, the greatest philosophical genius which has existed since Aristotle and Plato, Hegel, tried to replace upon their transcendental or celestial throne the divine ideas whose objectivity Kant had demolished by a criticism unfortunately imperfect and too metaphysical. It is true that Hegel went about his work of restoration in so impolitic a manner that he killed the good God forever. He took away from these ideas their divine character by showing to whoever will read him that they were never anything more than a creation of the human mind running through history in search of itself. To put an end to all religious insanities and the divine mirage he left nothing lacking but the utterance of those grand words which were said after him, almost at the same time, by two great minds who had never heard of each other—Ludwig Feuerbach, the disciple and demolisher of Hegel, and Auguste Comte, the founder of the positive philosophy of France. The words were as

follows: "Metaphysics are reduced to psychology." All the metaphysical systems have been nothing else than human psychology developing itself in history. Today it is no longer difficult to understand how the divine ideas were born; how they were created by the abstractive faculty of man. But in the time of Plato this knowledge was impossible. The collective mind, and consequently the individual mind as well, even that of the greatest genius, was not yet ripe for that. Scarcely had it been said with Socrates: "Know thyself!" (This self-knowledge existed only in a state of abstraction; in fact it amounted to nothing.) After Plato there was a sort of inverse movement in the development of the mind. Aristotle, the true father of science and of positive philosophy, did not deny the divine world, but concerned himself with it as little as possible. After him the Greeks of Alexandria established the first school of the positive sciences. They were atheists, but their atheism left no mark on their contemporaries. Science tended more and more to separate itself from life.

Another school, infinitely more influential, was formed at Alexandria. This was the school of neo-Platonists. These, confounding in an impure mixture the monstrous imaginations of the Orient with the ideas of Plato, were the true precursors and later elaborators of the Christian dogmas.

Thus the personal and gross egoism of Jehovah, the no less brutal and gross domination of the Romans, and the metaphysical ideal speculation of the Greeks, materialized by contact with the Orient, were the three historical elements which made up the spiritualistic religion of the Christians.

A god thus raised above the national differences of all countries, and in a certain sense the direct negation of them, must necessarily be an immaterial and abstract being. But, as we have said, faith in the existence of such a being, so difficult a matter, could not spring into existence suddenly. Consequently it went through a long course of preparation and development at the hands of Greek metaphysics, which were the first to establish in a philosophical manner the notion of the divine idea, a model eternally reproduced by the visible world. But the divinity conceived and created by Greek philosophy was an impersonal divinity. No logical and serious metaphysics being able to rise, or rather, to descend to the idea of a personal god, it became necessary, therefore, to imagine a god who was one and three at once. He was found in the brutal, selfish and cruel person of Jehovah, the national god of the Jews. But the Jews, in spite of that exclusive national spirit which distinguishes them even today, had become in fact, long before the birth of Christ, the most international people of the world. Some of them carried away as captives, but many more ever urged on by that mercantile passion which constitutes one of the principal traits of their character, they had spread through all countries, carrying everywhere the worship of their Jehovah, to whom they remained all the more faithful the more he abandoned them.

In Alexandria the terrible god of the Jews made the personal acquaintance of the metaphysical divinity of Plato; he married her, and from this marriage was born the spiritualistic but non-spiritual God of the Christians.

To fecundate these elements, that is, to cause them to unite in some form, a living, spontaneous fact was needed, without which they might have remained many centuries longer in a state of unproductive elements. This fact was not lacking to Christianity: it was the propagandism, martyrdom, and death of Jesus Christ. We know almost nothing of this personage, all that the gospels tell us being contradictory, and so fabulous that we can scarcely seize upon a few real and vital traits. But it is certain that he was the preacher of the poor, the friend and consoler of the wretched, of the ignorant, of the slaves, and of the women, and that by these last he was

much loved. He promised eternal life to all who suffer here below; and the number is immense. He was hanged, as a matter of course, by the representatives of the official morality and public order of that period. His disciples, and the disciples of his disciples succeeded in spreading, thanks to the Roman conquest and the destruction of the national barriers, and propagated the gospel in all the countries known to the ancients. Everywhere they were received with open arms by the slaves and the women, the two most oppressed, most suffering, and consequently the most ignorant classes of the ancient world. For even such few proselytes as they made in the privileged and learned world they were indebted to the influence of women. Their most extensive propagandism was directed almost exclusively among the unfortunate degraded by slavery. This was the first important revolt of the proletariat. The whole secret of the unprecedented triumph and spread of Christianity lies in the fact that it appealed to a world of degraded slaves—otherwise it would have been short-lived, for the doctrine taught by the apostles of Christ was too absurd from the standpoint of human reason, ever to have been accepted by enlightened men. Indeed, there must have been a very deep-seated dissatisfaction with life, a very intense thirst of heart, and an almost absolute poverty of thought, to secure the acceptance of the Christian absurdity, the most monstrous of all absurdities.

This was not only the negation of all the political, social and religious institutions of antiquity; it was the absolute overturn of common sense, of all human reason. The living being, the real world, were considered thereafter as nothing; whereas far beyond existing things, even far beyond the ideas of space and time, the last product of man's abstractive faculty rests in contemplation of his emptiness and absolute immobility, that abstraction, that *caput mortuum*, absolutely void of all contents, the true nothing, God, is proclaimed the only real, eternal, all-powerful being. The real All is declared nothing, and the absolute nothing the All. The shadow becomes the substance and the substance vanishes like a shadow.*

All this was audacity and absurdity unspeakable; it was the triumph of credulous stupidity over the mind, and in some cases the irony of a mind wearied, corrupted, disillusionized and disgusted in honest and serious search for truth; it was that necessity of shaking off thought and becoming brutally stupid so frequently felt by surfeited minds: *CREDO QUA ABSURDUM!* "I do not only believe in the absurd; I believe in it exactly and especially because it is absurd." In the same way many distinguished and enlightened minds in our day believe in Spiritism, tipping tables, and—but why go so far?—believe still in Christianity, in idealism, in God.

The belief of the ancient proletariat, like that of the modern, was robust and simple. The Christian propagandism appealed to its heart, not to its mind; to its eternal aspirations, its necessities, its sufferings, its slavery, not to its reason which still slept and therefore could know nothing about logical contradictions and the evidence of the absolute. It was interested solely in knowing when the hour of promised deliverance would strike, when the kingdom of God would come. As to theological dogmas, it did not trouble itself about them because it understood nothing about them. The proletariat converted to Christianity constituted its material but not its intellectual strength.

*In the theological and metaphysical systems of the Orient we find the principle of the annihilation of the real world in favor of the ideal and absolute abstraction. But it has not the added character of voluntary and deliberate negation which distinguishes Christianity; when those systems were conceived, the world of human thought, of will and of liberty, had not reached that stage of development which was afterwards seen in the Greek and Roman civilization.

As for the Christian dogmas, they were elaborated in a series of theological and literary works in the Councils, principally by the neo-Platonists of the Orient. The Greek mind had fallen so low that, in the seventh century of the Christian era, the period of the first Council, the idea of a personal God, pure, eternal and absolute mind, creator and supreme master, existing outside of us, was unanimously accepted by the Church Fathers; as a logical consequence of this absolute absurdity, it then became natural and necessary to believe in the immateriality and immortality of the human soul. We see how difficult it was, even for the Church Fathers, to conceive pure mind outside of any material form. And it should be added that, in general, it is the character of every metaphysical and theological argument to seek to explain one absurdity by another.

It was fortunate for Christianity that it met a world of slaves. It had another piece of good luck in the invasion of the barbarians, who were indifferent to all theological and metaphysical questions. So that their practical repugnance once overcome, it was not difficult to convert them theoretically to Christianity. For ten centuries Christianity, armed with the omnipotence of Church and State and opposed by no competition, was able to deprave, debase and falsify the mind of Europe. It had no competitors, because outside of the Church there were neither thinkers nor educated persons. It alone thought; it alone spoke and wrote; it alone taught. Though heresies arose in its bosom, they affected only the theological or practical developments of the fundamental dogma, never that dogma itself. The belief in God, pure spirit and creator of the world, and the belief in the immateriality of the soul remained untouched. This double belief became the ideal basis of the whole occidental and oriental civilization or Europe; it penetrated all the institutions, all the details of the public and private life of the classes and masses; in these it became incarnate, so to speak.

After that is it surprising that this belief has lived until the present day, continuing to exercise its disastrous influence upon select minds, such as those of Mazzini, Michelet and so many others? We have seen that the first attack upon it came from the renaissance of the free mind in the fifteenth century, which produced heroes and martyrs like Vanini, Giordano Bruno and Galileo. Although drowned in the noise tumult and passions of the Reformation, it noiselessly continued its invisible work, bequeathing to the noblest minds of each generation its task of human emancipation by the destruction of the absurd, until at last, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it again reappeared in broad day, boldly waiving the flag of atheism and materialism. The human mind then, one might have supposed, was at last about to deliver itself from all the divine obsessions. Not at all. The falsehood of which humanity had been the dupe for eighteen centuries (speaking of Christianity only) was once more to show itself more powerful than the truth. No longer able to make use of the black tribe, of the ravens consecrated by the Church, of the Catholic or Protestant priests, all confidence in whom had been lost, it made use of lay priests, short-robed liars and sophists, among whom the principle roles devolved upon two fatal men, one the falsest mind, the other the most doctrinally despotic will, of the last century—J. J. Rousseau and Robespierre. The former was the prophet of the doctrinaire state; and Robespierre, his worthy and faithful disciple, tried to become its high priest. Having heard the saying of Voltaire that, if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, Rousseau invented the supreme Being, the abstract and sterile God of the Deists. And it was in the name of the Supreme Being that Robespierre guillotined first the Hebertists and then the very genius of revolution, Danton, in whose person he assassinated the republic, thus preparing the way for the thenceforth necessary triumph of

the Napoleonic dictatorship. After the great recoil, the idealistic section sought and found servants less fanatical, less terrible, nearer to the diminished stature of the actual bourgeoisie. In France Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and—it must be added—Victor Hugo! the democrat, the republican, the quasi-socialist of today! and after them the whole melancholy and sentimental company of poor and pallid minds who, under the leadership of these masters, established the modern romantic school; in Germany the Schlegels, the Tiecks, the Novalis, and many others besides, whose names do not even deserve to be recalled. The literature created by this school was the reign of ghosts and phantoms. It could not stand the sunlight; the clare-obscure alone permitted it to live. No more could it stand the brutal contact of the masses. It was the literature of the delicate, distinguished aristocrats, aspiring to heaven, their country, and living on earth as if in spite of themselves. It had a horror and contempt for the politics and questions of the day; but when perchance it referred to them, it showed itself frankly reactionary, took the side of the church against the insolence of the freethinkers, of the kings against the peoples, and of all the aristocrats against the vile rabble of the streets. To understand this romantic literature the reason for its existence must be sought in the transformation which had been effected in the bosom of the bourgeois class since the revolution of 1793. From the Renaissance and the Reformation down to the Revolution, the bourgeoisie was the hero and representative of the revolutionary genius of history. From its bosom sprang most of the freethinkers of the eighteenth century, the religious reformers of the two preceding centuries and the apostles of human emancipation. It alone, naturally supported by the powerful arm of the people, made the revolution of 1789 and 1793. It proclaimed the downfall of the royalty and the church, the fraternity of the peoples, the rights of man and of the citizen. Those are its titles to glory; they are immortal! Soon it split. A considerable portion of the purchasers of national property having become rich, and supporting themselves no longer on the proletariat of the cities, but on the peasants of France, had no aspiration left but for peace, the re-establishment of public order, and the foundation of a strong and regular government. It therefore welcomed with joy the dictatorship of the first Bonaparte, and, although always Voltairean, did not view with displeasure the Concordat with the Pope and the re-establishment of the official church in France: "Religion is so necessary to the people!" Which means that, satiated themselves, this portion of the bourgeoisie then began to see that it was needful to the maintenance of their situation and the preservation of their newly-acquired estates to appease the unsatisfied hunger of the people by promises of heavenly manna. Then it was that Chateaubriand began to preach.* Napoleon fell; the restoration brought back to France the legitimate monarchy. This reaction threw the bourgeoisie back into the revolution, and with the revolutionary spirit that of scepticism was reawakened in it; again it became freethinking. It set Chateaubriand aside and began to read Voltaire again. The revolution of July resulted in lifting the tastes of the bourgeoisie—the bourgeois gentleman, a type which never fails to appear immediately the parvenu acquires wealth and power. In 1830 the wealthy bourgeoisie had definitively replaced the old nobility in the seats of power. It began to feel religious. This was not on its part simply an aping of aristocratic customs. It was also a necessity of its position. The proletariat had rendered it service in the overthrow of the

*It is a well-authenticated anecdote that Chateaubriand submitted to a publisher a work attacking faith. The publisher called his attention to the fact that atheism had gone out of fashion, that the reading public cared no more for it, and that the demand, on the contrary, was for religious works. Chateaubriand withdrew, but a few months later came back with his "Genius of Christianity.."

nobility, but now that it had served the purpose of the bourgeoisie the question to the latter was how to remand it to its place—the rear. It would have been too cynical to bluntly say for the interest of the bourgeoisie. The more unjust and inhuman an interest is, the greater need it has of sanction. Now, where find it if not in religion, that good protectress of all the well-fed and useful consoler of the hungry? And more than ever the triumphant bourgeoisie saw that religion was indispensable to the people.

There are only two ways of convincing the masses of the goodness of any social institution whatever. The first, the only real one, but also the most difficult to adopt—because it implies the abolition of the State, or, in other words, the abolition of the organized political exploitation of the majority by any minority whatsoever—would be the direct and complete satisfaction of the needs and aspirations of the people, which would be equivalent to the liquidation of the existence of the bourgeoisie class, or, again, to the abolition of the State. The other way, on the contrary, harmful only to the people, precious in its salvation of the bourgeois privileges, is no other than religion. That is the eternal mirage which leads away the masses in a search for divine treasures, while, much more crafty, the governing class contents itself with dividing among all its members—very unequally, moreover, and always giving most to him who possesses most—the miserable goods of earth and the plunder taken from the people, naturally including their political and social liberty.

There is not, they cannot be, a State without religion. Take the freest States in the world—the United States of America or the Swiss confederation, for instance—and see what an important part is played in all official discourses by divine Providence, that superior sanction of all States. Consequently whenever a chief of State speaks of God, be he the Emperor of Germany or the president of any republic whatsoever, be sure he is getting ready to shear once more his people-flock.

Thus the French liberal and Voltairian bourgeoisie, driven by temperament to a positivism (not to say a materialism) singularly narrow and brutal, having become the governing class by its triumph in 1830, the State had to give itself an official religion. A return to Catholicism was impossible on account of the strange contradiction which separates the invariable politics of Rome from the development of the economical and political interests of the middle class. In this respect Protestantism is much more advantageous. But it was impossible for the French bourgeoisie to become Protestant. To pass from one religion to another—to seriously change one's religion—a little faith is necessary. Now, in the exclusively positive heart of the French bourgeois, there is no room for faith. He professes the most profound indifference for all questions which touch neither his pocket first nor his social vanity afterward. He is as indifferent to Protestantism as to Catholicism. There was still one way left: to return to the humanitarian and revolutionary religion of the eighteenth century. But that could not be proclaimed by the bourgeois class without ridicule and scandal. Thus was born doctrinaire Deism. Its boldly avowed object was the reconciliation of the revolution with reaction, or, to use the language of the school, of the principle of liberty with that of authority and naturally to the advantage of the latter. This reconciliation signified: in politics, a juggling with popular liberty for the benefit of bourgeoisie rule, represented by the monarchical and constitutional state; in philosophy, the deliberate submission of free reason to the eternal principles of faith.

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